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ROBERT'S HOLIDAYS

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ON THE SEA-SHORE.

ROBERT'S HOLIDAYS.

BY

N. D'ANVERS.

FOUNDED ON THE FRENCH OF Z. FLEURIOT.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



LONDON:
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TO MY NEPHEWS

ROLAND, CHARLIE, AND HUBERT

This Little Volume

IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

THORNTON HEATH,
September, 1875.

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ROBERT'S HOLIDAYS.

CHAPTER I.

MY GOOD RESOLUTIONS — THE SEA — MY FIRST ATTEMPTS AT SWIMMING.

Hurrah! the holidays have really begun at last, and, marvellous to relate, I am going to write about them.

People don't generally write their lives at twelve years old. Truth to tell, we children have enough scribbling to do in school, and are fonder of marbles than pens and ink in play-time. As for me, I'm so fond of running about, that I am content to gallop round and round our garden for an hour at a time, just for the pleasure of galloping, and no one can be more surprised than I am myself at my having a pen between my fingers the second day of the holidays.

It was yesterday, when the prizes were distributed at our school, that the idea of writing an account of myself first occurred to me. You must know I did so little work last term that I had no reason to feel proud at the breaking-up, and when I found myself face to face with the masters and heard the terrible words, "Robert Dunkirk, number sixteen," I really could have torn my hair with mortification.

I was not, however, altogether left out—my name was honourably mentioned; but after all, what is an honourable mention? Rather a phantom-like distinction, I'm afraid.

My cousin Edward carried off all the prizes; and as I was looking about me, I suddenly caught sight of his mother and mine amongst the visitors on the very front bench. My aunt looked proud and happy, but my mother sad and disappointed. I felt such a lump in my throat! and if it hadn't been that I was surrounded by my schoolfellows, I think I should have broken down. As it was, I could hardly keep the tears out of my eyes.

I knew it was all my own fault that my mother was not as happy as Edward's. It's only because my cousin works so hard that he does so well, and my master has said to me a hundred times: "Robert, you can succeed if you choose to try."

Yes, if I had thought and felt as I do now at the

beginning of the term, everything might have been different. I might have been called up to receive several prizes, and have seen my dear mother's face beaming with joy.

I felt very sorry, very angry with myself, and I wondered how I could manage to prevent these feelings from wearing off and make myself stick to my good resolution.

All manner of absurd ideas came into my head, and I should have been quite ready to submit to being tattooed; to write "REMEMBER" on my arm in Indian ink or to draw a symbolic laurel-wreath upon my hand. At last I felt in my pockets, and discovered a note-book without any writing in it and a pencil which had never been cut. As I had lost my penknife, I managed to hack a point of some sort to the pencil with the aid of my teeth and nails, and then I wrote the date and the word "REMEMBER" on the first leaf of the pocket-book.

In the evening I showed mamma my little note. She saw I really was in earnest this time, and said I was quite right to try and fix my resolution in my memory; so I thought I would put it down in my big, new copybook as well. Now you know the origin of my holiday journal. I hope I shall go on with it, that's all.

Shall I go on with it? That is the question I have

asked myself whenever I have caught sight of the big red copybook during the last two days. It is so delightful to be quite free, to have no classes to attend or lessons to prepare. It really would be a dreadful pity to ink your fingers in the holidays! and, besides, it is so hot.

It is the fourth day of the holidays, and I don't mind telling you, in confidence, that I feel rather dull already. I am tired of play—one feels heavy and languid when one has done nothing all day. It will amuse me to go on with my journal, and I shall enjoy reading it over presently. If I am dull already, what will it be before the holidays are over?

My cousin Louis has been to see me to-day. He is a very good boy, my cousin Louis, but what airs he gives himself! I say he is a good boy, because everybody tells me so; but for my part I don't think he's good to his mother, his sister, or his schoolfellows. He sneered to-day when he heard me speak of "nurse," as I call our old servant, whom I have known ever since I was a baby. He patronized me until I was boiling over with rage, and his "Yes, dear," and "Well, little one," irritated me almost beyond bearing. When he said, as he went away, "Best love to your nurse," I rushed into the kitchen where Susan was ironing, and without taking breath, I shouted in her ear, "I mean to call you Susan in future, do you



"I WAS ONLY IN FUN, DEAR OLD NURSE!" Page 15.

hear?" bringing my clenched fist down on the table with a bang, to add emphasis to my words.

Poor old lady! She heard, she understood, she changed colour, and finally burst into tears. In a moment I had sprung upon the table, and, regardless of the risk of upsetting the irons or the saucer of water, I threw my arms round her neck and cried:

"I was only in fun, dear old nurse, only in fun."

She believed me at once, and wiped her eyes. What a stupid Louis is, with his fine airs! What a stupid I was to go and hurt dear old Susan's feelings to please him! She is so good to mamma, so good to everybody, I shall call her nurse in spite of all Louis says. It's his little sandy moustache which makes him so proud. But never mind, I shall have a moustache too, one of these days, and I shall not be stuck up like he is, for all that. Why, my uncle Frederick, who is six feet two, and has a long beard like a pacha, has an old nurse who calls him Master Fred still, and he does not mind it. I mean to be like Uncle Frederick.

We are still in Paris, and I am longing to be in the country. Mamma is talking of joining Louis' mother in taking a furnished house at Enghien. I have never been there; but I know there is a lake, and I can't help dancing with delight when I think of it.

My aunt came to-day to make arrangements about

Enghien. The heat was most oppressive, and Louis, who had followed me into the dining-room, threw himself upon the sofa to rest. Presently he brought out some illustrated newspapers, and showed me some pictures which I did not like at all. He said very queer things, too. I don't know what mamma would have said if she had heard them.

Perhaps I ought to tell her about this, but it's horrid to tell tales. I really scarcely know what to do.

I don't think I will say anything, because I shouldn't like to be a sneak; and besides, if mamma knew Louis thoroughly, there would be an end of going to Enghien, where there is a lake.

I feel very uncomfortable. I seem to hear a voice repeating, "Tell your mother, tell your mother;" and it worries me so, it takes all the pleasure out of everything.

Perhaps it is not telling tales to trust your mother.

I *have* told her now: I couldn't be happy without. She was very much surprised. "Why, Louis is quite a pattern boy!" she exclaimed, and she asked me for some proofs of what I had said. With that I ran off to the stationer's opposite, and bought some of the pictures Louis had shown me. They convinced mamma that I was speaking the truth; and, after kissing me as a sign of her approval, she pointed out to me the

difference between spying upon my companions and going to my parents in a difficulty.

But only imagine how I felt when she wound up by saying:

"I am very much obliged to you for telling me, and I shall write to your aunt at once. There is still time to decline her offer."

"But the lake!" I cried, "the lake!"

"Ah yes, we shall have to give up the lake, and Louis into the bargain; but you were a brave boy to do as you thought right, and I don't mean you to suffer for it. We will go to the sea instead. I will manage to afford it somehow."

Didn't I kiss and hug mamma after that! The sea! the very thing I have longed for all my life, for I have never seen it yet! You're welcome to your lake and newspapers now, Louis, for *we* are going to the sea, which will be much better fun!

After I left mamma, I counted up the money I had in my purse. There are so many things I shall want. Some fine twine for making nets; a book on fishing, and some fishing-tackle. I have fourteen and sixpence, which will be just about enough.

Mamma has written to aunt, and I have made a bonfire of Louis' papers. Who cares for a lake? Hurrah for the sea!

Really the days and hours we have to wait seem

endless. Fancy staying in this furnace of a town when the sea is awaiting us!

We have decided on going to St. Pierre, where we shall meet Uncle Alfred, Aunt Mary, and several cousins.

Only one thing troubles me, and that is, that there is a little girl amongst them. The fact is, I have noticed that little girls are often wilful, tiresome, fond of chattering, and as full of whims as timid ladies.

Now I, who am going to be a soldier, don't intend to waste my time in dancing attendance on some dainty little Miss.

Mamma looked over my shoulder whilst I was writing that, and scolded me for it, saying she did not think I was so selfish.

So I promised to be very polite to my cousin Bertha. I hear she is ten years old, and perhaps she will be very nice, for her brothers are very fond of her.

I hope to learn to swim well when I am at St. Pierre. I know it is a capital exercise, just the thing to make me grow strong, and I want to be *very* strong, for of course soldiers always are.

How delightful it must be to be in the sea! I fancy myself there already, and amuse myself by striking out first with one arm, and then with the other, and taking imaginary dips and plunges on the dining-room carpet. What fun it will be to fling myself head fore-

most into the beautiful green waves. Some people call them blue, I know; but others say green, and so shall I, for I think green is a much prettier colour than blue, and anyhow it is brighter.

How capitally I do swim on the dining-room floor, to be sure. I stretch myself at full length with my head raised, and the palms of my hands pressed together, then out I strike, first with the left hand and then with the right, much to the amusement of mamma and nurse, who, however, rather object to the effect upon my clothes.

"It's high time you set off, ma'am," said Susan only this morning; "for Master Robert is making his waistcoat and trousers in a fine mess with rolling about on the floor."

That's the way she talks; but when I go into the room where she sits at work, she gets a duster and gives the floor a good rub, so that I can go on with my swimming where she can see me.





CHAPTER II.

AN ATTACK AND ITS CONSEQUENCES—I HESITATE BETWEEN BATIGNOLLES AND BRITTANY.

I FEEL so cross and peevish, that I have been obliged to come out of the drawing-room that I might not annoy my dear mother with my ill-tempered face any longer. But it really is no wonder that I am put out. Everything was most beautifully arranged, and now Aunt Lucy fancies she's got an attack of asthma. Could anything be more provoking? We shall be tied to Paris for the whole holidays now! To Paris, where we are nearly melting with the heat; not a companion anywhere, not a game to be had—nothing to amuse one but the boats on the Seine. Now the Seine is all very well in its way, but it won't do when one might have had the sea. I am altogether overwhelmed by the



"WE MUST NEVER DESPAIR OF ANYTHING." Page 21.

shock of hearing this news. To have counted first on Enghien and then on St. Pierre, and to get neither the one nor the other at the last moment, is more than anybody could stand.

There's a carriage at the door now. Mamma is going to Batignolles to see Aunt Lucy, and what shall I do with myself? What is to become of me? I might go and cut off Griffin's ears: that would put nurse into a rage, and work off some of my ill-humour; but perhaps I had better not do that. I don't quite like having written it even; why should the poor cat pay the penalty of my bad temper?

Mamma brought back Dr. Bennett with her; a man with a double chin, who wears spectacles, and does not like children. I for one can't bear *him*, for I heard him talking to mamma about the necessity of her remaining with Aunt Lucy. "There is no knowing how this attack may end," he said solemnly, taking a pinch of snuff; and when mamma exclaimed, "You don't think her dangerously ill? You don't mean to say you give up hope," he shook his head and said:

"We must never despair of anything."

Of course I did not dare to interfere; but I fidgetted about, leaning over the back of mamma's chair, and listened eagerly for what was to come next. Mamma looked very grave at the doctor's solemn manner, and presently she said, with a sigh:

"I could not possibly leave Paris under the circumstances!"

"Leave Paris! madam, leave Paris?" cried this horrid doctor. "Do you mean to say you thought of doing so, with your only sister in such a state, and no one at hand to nurse her—it may be, to comfort her last hours?"

"I was thinking of poor Robert," said mamma, looking kindly at me. "I had promised to take him to the sea-side!"

"Robert must wait," replied the doctor, getting up to go, and giving me the tips of his fingers to shake; "a good lesson for him, madam, a good lesson."

I felt disposed to throw one of the sofa cushions after him, but I restrained myself, and I felt almost ashamed of my eagerness when mamma kissed me and said:

"Don't break your heart yet, Robert; wait till I return before you despair. I must go back to poor Aunt Lucy now. If you could see how she is suffering, you would say yourself, 'Don't leave her, mamma; stay and do what you can for her.'"

I could not say so *without* seeing her at all events; so I held my peace, and went to watch nurse at her ironing, worrying her life out, I am afraid, with grumbling at everything and everybody.

Mamma has just come in. She says it is impossible

to leave Paris; Aunt Lucy has begged her to stay. I am furious—all my delightful schemes are at an end! Mamma has been in to propose that I should go to my uncle at St. Pierre alone. Shall I go, or shall I not?

I will not go; I will not leave my dear mother; so she has ordered Susan to unpack our boxes. If Griffin falls into my hands now, I shall certainly cut off his ears.

Mamma has been with Aunt Lucy ever since quite early this morning. Attacks of asthma seem to be as long and tiresome as attacks of bronchitis or anything else. I have hardly seen mamma for two days, and I am dreadfully dull.

What was my surprise when I overheard the following dialogue between mamma and nurse outside my door!

Said mamma: "Have you unpacked Master Robert's trunk, Susan?"

Said Susan: "No, ma'am; I began with yours, but I am just going to do his."

"Do no such thing; but pack mine again. We are going after all."

"Where, please, ma'am?"

"To St. Pierre. I am going to send Master Robert there."

"Oh, poor child, how delighted he will be."

"I hope he will. I don't like parting with him, but it can't be helped."

"Then you are not going yourself, ma'am?"

"Only part of the way. I shall start with you and Robert; but I shall stop at Rennes to do some business, and return to Paris at once, whilst you two go on to St. Pierre."

"Do you mean to return to Paris alone, ma'am?"

"Yes, but I shall go and stay at Batignolles for the rest of the holidays. I cannot leave my sister; she may not have long to live."

"Mamma!" I cried, rushing out of my room, "I will not go. I will go to Batignolles with you. I don't want to go to Brittany without you."

Mamma kissed me, and said very gravely:

"I can't take you with me, my boy. The least noise inflicts terrible suffering on poor Aunt Lucy; and as we must be separated, it is better that you should go to St. Pierre, where you can amuse yourself and get some colour in these pale cheeks."

I knew there was no more to be said when mamma spoke in that tone of voice, so I was silent. She is going part of the way with us, though, which is some comfort.





I WILL DESCRIBE THE TRAVELLERS. Page 25.



CHAPTER III.

THE TRAVELLERS — THE CAT GRIFFIN — FIDO — I DO MY DUTY AS HEAD OF THE FAMILY.

Our boxes are packed up again, and I have been having a regular steeple-chase, jumping over everything in the house, riding on the trunks, and making wheels of myself in the hall.

We are really going to start to-day. Everything is ready; mamma and nurse are busy making their final arrangements, and I am mounted on my own trunk, with my travelling-bag slung across my shoulder, and my note-book in my hand.

Half-past six just striking: another long half-hour to wait. To make it pass quickly, I will describe the travellers.

(1.) First of all comes *mamma*.—I suppose everybody

thinks his own mother charming; but quite apart from any filial favouritism, mine really is very pretty, very fascinating. She is tall and slender, she has large black eyes which can look very severe, but are generally kind and loving, and she has beautiful auburn hair, dashed with white. When I hide the white part with the brown, she looks quite young. Everybody loves and respects her, but *I* adore her; and I don't know why I don't do more to please her, I am sure.

(2.) *Robert.*—Now to describe myself. Not at all an easy thing to do, by the way. But there is a big glass over the fireplace: I will climb on my trunk and look at myself. Here, then, is a full-length portrait of the famous Robert: a slim little body, with very thin legs and long arms, like knitting-needles, surmounted by rather a pretty face, with a button-hole of a mouth, a nose of some sort or another—a Roman one I think—and large blue eyes. Then I have light-brown curly hair, and a little wart on my left eyebrow, which would do to identify me if I were lost.

I should much prefer to be tall and dark, and have moustaches, than to be slender, pale, and fair; but I have already found out that everybody likes what he is not better than what he is. But now that I have taken my own likeness, I seat myself on my box again, and turn to—

(3.) *Susan.*—Our good old nurse is very fat, and has

cheeks as red as an apple, a nose like an extinguisher, and little eyes which twinkle like glow-worms. She has scarcely any neck, her arms are short and plump, her feet heavy and clumsy; but no one who looks at her ever thinks of these disadvantages: she has such a bright good-natured expression, you feel you can go to her in all your troubles. It's thanks to her that I am able to introduce—

(4.) *Griffin*—Who is a funny-looking white cat, streaked with grey. He is at this moment passing backwards and forwards, with tail erect, amongst our luggage, rubbing himself against the boxes with the greatest indifference. A few months ago, in the midst of a heavy storm, a tiny little cat tumbled in at the window of the attic whilst nurse was ironing. It rolled over on her table, drenched with rain, trembling with cold and half dead. Susan took it up at once, and we set to work to dry, feed, and coddle it, until at last, after some hours of careful nursing, it revived and showed signs of spirit, for as I was mechanically stroking its whiskers it suddenly gave a scratch at my cheek with one of its paws, which made nurse cry out, "Ungrateful wretch!" The old lady was furious, and threatened to throw the poor creature into the Seine; but presently it jumped upon her knees and rubbed itself up against her with such evident confidence in her, that she was mollified, and put off the drowning

until the next day. When the next day came, however, Griffin did not drink the waters of the Seine, but some fresh milk poured into a pretty blue saucer by Susan herself; and if he goes with us to St. Pierre it will be just to please nurse. Mammá has no desire for this peculiar travelling companion, but Susan and I think he had better go, although our landlady offered to take charge of him for us.

"He would die of dulness away from us, you see, ma'am," said Susan; and so the matter was settled.

In spite of what nurse said, however, Griffin is not much given to dulness, and I strongly suspect that he would have been just as ready to enjoy the food put out for him by our landlady as by Susan; but I am very fond of animals, and I begged mamma very earnestly to let us take Griffin, as Fido was to go. Now for the fifth and last introduction.

(5.) *Fido* is my dog, or rather he belonged to a little sister of mine who died about two years ago. During her last illness she asked for a dog. I remember exactly how she looked when she expressed this wish. She was lying in her little bed surrounded by dolls, and toys of all sorts, including animals of every variety, donkeys, dogs, cats, lambs, &c., &c.; but she suddenly said, "Mamma, I don't care for any of these things now; take them away—I want something that is really alive; a live lamb, or a live dog."

A lamb of course was out of the question; but mamma sent for a dog at once, and took the first which came. He was not a dog of noble race and unmixed breed, but just a little commonplace cur with a glossy black coat, two white spots above his eyes, which look like spectacles, and a dash of white upon his back. My little sister played with Fido during the last days of her life, and when she was dead he curled himself up at her feet. The house resounded with his howls of despair on the day of the funeral, and it was heart-rending to see him jump on the empty bed and sniff at the pillows. Often during the next few days I found my mother on her knees by my little sister's bed, and Fido dashing up and down like a mad dog, testifying his grief by horrible yells. Mamma had not the heart to part with the faithful creature, so she gave him to me, and I don't think there is a happier dog in the world than he is now.

But I hear seven o'clock striking and a carriage stopping at the door.

Forward—march, to the North-Western Railway Station!

Mamma told me I was to get tickets and see the luggage labelled, as she wants me to grow independent. I know men ought by rights to see to these things; but hitherto I have been a good deal hampered by my tiresome nervousness, which always comes over me

just at the moment for action. I felt sorely tempted to refuse to do as mamma wished; but she looked so tired, that I took the purse and the slip of paper with her directions which she held out to me. As I glanced at the latter, I read "Two single second-class tickets for Auray, one second return for Rennes."

"*You* travel second, mamma!" I exclaimed.

She nodded her head in assent, but nurse burst in with the words:

"No, ma'am; you shall go first with Robert, and I will go third with Griffin."

"Third! Why, Susan, you would not sleep a wink," replied mamma.

"Nor would you in a second-class carriage, ma'am. Why, the first-class seats are scarcely easy enough for you. Besides, perhaps Griffin will mew, and Robert will fidget about, and talk until he goes to sleep. Do you mean to arrive at Rennes knocked up? If you do, of course there will be nothing for it but for us to go back with you, which won't do much to advance matters, *I* should think."

The dispute would probably have gone on ever so much longer, if I had not thought of a plan; which was, that Susan, Griffin, and I should go second-class, and mamma first. Griffin's mewings were not likely to keep *me* awake.

"But I don't like to be separated from you," said

mamma; and I whispered to her, that we shall all be able to travel first-class when I am grown up.

She smiled and said: "Well, meanwhile we must be content to go second; now get the tickets, or we shall be left behind."

"Am I to do as I like?"

"No; to follow the directions on the paper."

"And do you really think, mamma," I said, firmly drawing myself up, "do you really think I shall consent to give you the neuralgia; you know you always have it when you are kept awake. No; I am the head of the family, and I shall act as such."

Mamma laughed at my blustering manner, but I quickly slid in amongst the people waiting for their tickets. I felt rather uncomfortable, for people stared at me; but a glance at mamma, sitting down with nurse standing beside her, re-assured me. If I had not had enough to do to attend to my business as the gentleman of the party, I should not have been able to help laughing at the absurd appearance of poor old Susan holding the basket in which Griffin was comfortably ensconced in one hand, and clutching at the string to which Fido was tied with the other. The dear old lady's look of fussy importance between her two animals was most amusing; but in the responsible position in which I found myself, I was obliged to preserve my gravity as best I could.

It was a nervous moment when I had to approach the grating of the ticket-office, but I managed to ask for two second-class tickets to Auray, and one first to Rennes without hesitation. I thanked the man who served me politely, as mamma says we ought to be civil to everybody, took up my change, and made my way back to the platform. Then I relieved nurse of Fido, whom she would have liked to stow away in her pocket if it had been big enough, and took him to the carriage for dogs. I had the greatest trouble to make him get into it, and I think animals are a great nuisance when one is travelling. It was no use shouting again and again, "You will be let out to-morrow," he went on barking all the same, biting at the bars and poking his nose beneath them, whilst the porters looked on, laughing. I left him at last, thinking that it is a fine thing to be a reasonable being, and went to say good-bye to mamma, who was in very low spirits at parting from me. It is certainly tiresome to have to be economical; but I am glad I made mamma go first-class, and if after all she should be ill when we get to Rennes, I shall not have the courage to go on without her.





CHAPTER IV.

OUR FELLOW-PASSENGERS—GRIFFIN MAKES A SENSATION —WE ARRIVE AT RENNES.

HERE I am, then, in a second-class carriage with Susan and Griffin, the latter still invisible. The carriage is lighted, and two corner places are already taken. I am sitting opposite to nurse, who has one hand through the handle of her basket, and is stroking the cat with the other to keep him quiet. In the third corner there is a very stout gentleman, who seems dreadfully lost and uncomfortable, and in the fourth sits a delicate-looking little lady in a bonnet nearly as tall as herself, whose handkerchief smells so strongly of musk, that nurse and Griffin both sneezed violently as they passed her. Fortunately, however, Susan made such a noise about it, that Griffin's little sniffle was drowned and passed

unnoticed. If he had been discovered, we should certainly have had a fuss about bringing animals into our carriage. But here come two more passengers—an old priest and a young English clergyman. The former is very feeble, with a face covered with wrinkles, and the latter looks round as he steps in, and says: "There's not a corner vacant for you, sir."

My first impulse, on hearing this, was to draw back into *my* corner, but the next moment I started forward and said, "You can have mine, sir." The young clergyman thanked me, and the old gentleman bowed courteously and raised his hat as he took my seat, whilst the stout man and the dainty lady in the other corners spread themselves out, and looked rudely indignant at this addition to our numbers. You can imagine, then, how put out they were when two gaily-dressed young fellows jumped in at the last minute, smelling strongly of tobacco! Even nurse and I, who knew what good manners are too well to grumble beneath our breath as the others did, exchanged looks of dismay. But, hurrah! we are off, and a cooling breeze is blowing in our faces—too cool for the little lady, who moved from her corner and sat down by Susan. I congratulated myself on having made mamma travel comfortably first-class, for even if her carriage should be full, her fellow-passengers would probably be ladies and gentlemen, not such as some of those we were

shut up with. The two fine young gentlemen laughed and talked so loudly, that I could hardly hear what the good old clergyman said to me. He asked me where I went to school, and what I liked learning best, as kindly as if I were his son or his nephew; and when he heard that I had no father, and lived alone with mamma, he said: "The only son of his mother and she was a widow. I suppose you work very hard to please her." I couldn't exactly say that I did, you know; but I told him I meant to try, and so I do. Indeed, long after the old gentleman had fallen asleep, and nurse, the fat man in the corner, and the delicate lady, were snoring lustily in full chorus, I sat looking out of the window thinking of all I meant to do next term. Presently however, in spite of the confusion about me, I fell into an uneasy sleep, and was dreaming of my future triumphs, when I was suddenly woke by a dreadful scream. I started up and rubbed my eyes: the scream came from the pale lady, who was trembling with terror and pointing to the basket on nurse's knee, whilst Susan, all unconscious of the uproar, was snoring like a trooper.

"What is it? what is it?" shouted everybody at once.

"Oh there! there! at the bottom of the woman's basket! I shall die of fright!" cried the lady, still pointing in the same direction, and drawing back as far as she could.

I looked, and, sure enough, at the bottom of the woman's basket, that is to say in Susan's, I saw Griffin's green eyes glittering as he gazed up at the lamp through the wicker-work. I burst into a fit of laughter, peal following peal, till the tears stood in my eyes. This did what the scream and everything else had failed to do—it roused nurse; she moved, down went the basket, and out scrambled Griffin, mewing fearfully. Frightened at the strange scene in which he found himself, he sprang upon the delicate lady's dress, but was greeted with such yells of horror that he turned tail and fled into the arms of the old clergyman, who was soothing and caressing him, when nurse, now wide awake, missed her basket and began crying out—

"My basket! Griffin! Master Robert, some one has stolen Griffin—the poor innocent creature, where is he?"

I could not speak for laughing, and the lady, who had caused all the uproar, went on, "It's shameful! Have the train stopped! I won't stay in this carriage; I will make a complaint."

Hereupon the fat man and the two fine young gentlemen began saying all kinds of insulting things to nurse, who merely observed, as the clergyman put Griffin into her arms,—

"Well, here's a fine set-out about a poor cat, and no mistake! What harm would he do, I should like to



GRIFFIN SPRANG UPON THE DELICATE LADY'S DRESS. Page 2[illegible]

know? Look at him, ma'am, he's as quiet as a lamb—he wouldn't hurt a living thing, that he wouldn't."

"There's a separate carriage for animals," burst in one of the ill-mannered passengers.

"The poor creature wouldn't have liked to travel without me," said nurse simply, as if that settled the question.

"Well, I daresay they would have found a berth there for you as well; you would both have been in your right places then."

I was boiling over with indignation, and I was going to give the last speaker a bit of my mind, when the young clergyman said:

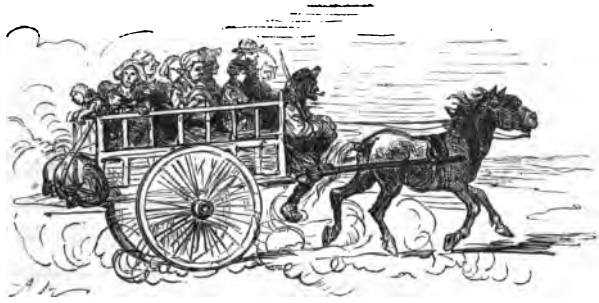
"We gentlemen scorn to answer rude and vulgar people. You must not get into a dispute with those men, my boy;" and his companion added:

"Have patience, my little friend; it will all come right presently."

As he spoke the train stopped, and the lady, with her false curls, her musk, and her terrors, got out. When she was gone, we settled down again a little, but it was a long time before I could go to sleep, owing to the noisy talking of the young men already referred to, who used enough slang to disgust me with it ever afterwards. When I did go off, however, I slept soundly, and I was surprised to hear a shout of "Rennes!" before I seemed to have been asleep for

an hour. I got up, stretched myself, looked about me, and there was mamma, who had woke me by kissing me, waiting for me to go and have breakfast with her. Mamma made me eat a good meal, and gave me her last instructions. My heart ached so at parting with her, that the least thing would have made me give up going on without her. But she would not hear of that; she took me back to the carriage, and her last words, as the train went off, were—"Write your journal for me." "I will! I will!" I cried, and we were separated. I threw myself into one of the vacant corners, and, strange to say, I was soon fast asleep again.





CHAPTER V.

MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS — FATHER NEPTUNE'S EQUIPAGE — THE SEA — WHAT A FINE THING IT IS TO BE SUNBURNT.

I SLEPT soundly all the way to Auray, mamma, and when I woke I looked for you and called you, but you did not answer. Uncle Alfred was waiting for us at the station and I recognized him at once, although he is rather stouter than he used to be, and the long beard which I admired so much is streaked with white. His forehead looks more massive than ever, too, as he has become a little bald. He received me very affectionately, asked me a great many questions about you, and told me I was impatiently expected at St. Pierre. He laughed heartily when nurse lifted up the lid of her basket and showed him Griffin's frightened face; but in spite of his laughter he spoke kindly, and

promised that our cat should be welcome at the hearth and board of—his own animals.

After leaving the station, I went for a little walk in the town with uncle. The silence everywhere astonished me, I had never been in such a quiet place before. Uncle evidently thought me rather a strange-looking boy, for he watched me with an amused expression, and presently he said, "Why, Robert, whatever is the matter?"

"Nothing, uncle," I replied, "I am only surprised at everything here, and how delicious the air feels."

It is quite true, mamma, the air is delicious, and makes me feel so fresh and strong; something seems to swell in my chest—my lungs, I suppose—and I keep on drawing long breaths. You know everything is new to me here: I have never been out of Paris before, and Auray of course isn't a bit like Paris. The streets are deserted, and there is grass growing in some of them; the few men at work whistle and sing to themselves, and there are children, cats, dogs, goats, and other creatures running about here, there, and everywhere. After passing along a great many winding and badly paved streets, we crossed a broad road and arrived at the inn where uncle had put up his carriage. Such a pretty inn, mamma, a long, low, white house, with no sign but a big bunch of green. Uncle was at once surrounded by peasants eager to

consult him; nurse went off to get some food for Griffin and Fido, who were both famished with hunger; and I was left entirely to my own devices. Not quite knowing what to do with myself, I wandered about the house, exploring every nook and corner, and found something amusing wherever I went. You should just see the big kitchen in that inn, mamma! Such a chimney, and a huge stove with three fires burning in it at once, side by side. Like the rest of the house, the kitchen seemed open to all comers. A poor old man, a cock, and a dog, all went in at the same time as I did. Presently a horse passed slowly by and looked in wistfully, as if he would like to join us; then a pig poked his nose under the gate, grunted, and ran off. Every now and then, however, when the numbers grew oppressive, a servant chased people and animals away together with a big green broom, and there was a little peace.

Uncle seems quite at home in this great Noah's ark; everybody speaks to him, and he knows everybody. I should like to be a member of Parliament like uncle when I am a man. It must be a grand thing to be a representative, and have to look after the affairs of a whole province. I wonder if I could be a member of Parliament and an officer too. I think I should like to be an officer whilst I am young and a member of Parliament when I am old, because by that

time I suppose I shall be patient and have plenty of experience. Well we shall see about all that presently, and I've got to become a man first of all.

"I'm going to take you in Father Neptune's holiday waggon," said uncle presently. "Father Neptune, you must know, is the porter, postman, and messenger of St. Pierre, as well as a fisherman on his own account. We call him Father Neptune because he once went to sea on the ship *Neptune*, and still wears a hat with the name of his old vessel on it. His waggon is a very rough equipage with no springs, and you will be finely jolted about in it, if there is room to jolt about, for it is sure to be crowded; but if you mean to be a soldier, you must get used to a little hardship."

I told him I quite agreed with him, and went to let nurse know she must get ready. I found her in great trouble about Griffin, who declined to allow himself to be caught. Between us, however, we at last succeeded in getting hold of him, and by dint of perseverance we squeezed him into his basket again, receiving many a scratch for our pains. Then I told nurse to make haste, and as she was bustling about, in came a tall, sturdy, sun-burnt countryman, with long red hair and a bushy, grizzled, red beard. He looked at me fixedly, touched his hat with a big, brown, sinewy hand, nodded his head, and turned on his heel.

I followed him, whilst nurse exclaimed, "Is the

poor man dumb?" and as I went down the stairs, I heard him saying to uncle in a voice of thunder:

"We are to sail at once then, sir?" He was certainly not dumb; but I had no time to ask any questions, for uncle replied:

"Yes, Father Neptune;" adding, "come along, Robert."

We went out into an open courtyard where there was a kind of break waiting for us, with no steps or cushions, which was already full of women, children, and parcels. One little, black horse was to draw this heavy load!

Uncle climbed in; nurse climbed in with Griffin; I climbed in; Fido climbed in. First we tried to sit down, and when we had accomplished that, we tried to find some place for our feet and legs. I managed to stow mine away between a big loaf of black bread and a jar of pickles! Our driver looked on at our struggles to wedge ourselves in with the greatest unconcern, and when we were at last settled somehow, I said to uncle:

"Where will Father Neptune sit?" As I spoke, the old sailor sprang upon one of the shafts of the waggon, and seated himself on an iron rod which ran across the front. I wish you could have seen Father Neptune there, mamma, with his trident—I mean his whip, in his hand, his right foot on the right shaft, his

left dangling over on the other side, his pipe in his mouth, at which he puffed gravely away without taking the slightest notice of the exhortations addressed to him by the timid passengers.

"Oh, Father Neptune, *do* go carefully; we are so over-crowded, the least thing will upset us."

"Father Neptune, stop at the foot of the hill. I will walk up it."

"Father Neptune, cross the bridge at a foot-pace."

"Father Neptune, you can't possibly turn the waggon round from where you are sitting!"

All the time, however, Father Neptune remained as immovable as a rock; but when uncle said, "It's time to be off!" the old man clapped his hat firmly on his head with his clenched fist, threw himself back, turned round the waggon and raised his whip. We started—that is to say, we all began to dance about in the break, like parched peas on a drum-head, as the schoolboys say.

I am glad you were not with us then. I should not have liked to see you sitting on a wooden bench, and being bumped up and down as we were. It didn't hurt me; indeed, I rather enjoyed the fun, and it was enough to make anybody laugh to hear nurse scolding Griffin for mewing. I did what I could to calm them both, but it was no wonder the poor cat should protest to the best of his ability against the unmerited and



FATHER NEPTUNE.

unexpected blows he got first on one side and then on the other. Finally he managed to get out of his basket, mewing piteously; and instead of grumbling at him as our former fellow-passengers had done, everybody set to work to pet and caress him except Neptune, who never once turned his head to see what the hubbub was about. Fido, however, seemed to have more influence than any one over poor Griffin: he administered a few consolatory pats with his paw, saying "bow-wow" in a soothing manner, and at last the two friends both settled down on nurse's knee, where they slept till the end of the journey. The country we passed through was very gloomy looking. There were very few trees, and those few stunted and withered. After going up a very steep hill we met a man who said something to Neptune, to which our driver replied by gestures only; but half a mile farther on we halted, and Neptune came and took away the big loaf of black bread from under my feet and a very heavy sack, both of which he laid down on a big stone by the wayside, although there was nobody within sight to receive them. Then he climbed back to his iron bar, and on we jolted again.

"But what will become of the loaf and the bag?" I asked uncle.

"They will be taken away by the man whom we met just now."

"But suppose they should be stolen."

"You talk like a little Parisian, Robert. Nobody will touch them."

On, on we went, now trotting, now galloping. At last I fell asleep, but a great jolt woke me. I sat up, rubbed my eyes, and looked about me in astonishment, for it seemed as if the sky had fallen to the ground and was spread out at our feet. I gave a loud cry, and struggling to my feet I seized uncle by the arm and said, "Uncle, what is that? what is that?"

"What do you mean?" he inquired.

"Why that—that thing over there!"

Uncle burst out laughing; and oh, mamma! what do you think it was? It was the sea, and it was so beautiful, so beautiful, I never thought it would have been half so lovely.

Towards evening we arrived at St. Pierre. I saw a cluster of houses, a little ivy-covered church with a grey tower, and stretching away beyond them to the glorious endless sea was a glittering expanse of sand and shingle which uncle called the beach.

Aunt was watching for us at the door of a good-sized house, with several balconies; a kind of Swiss cottage, in fact. She received me very kindly, and gave me some supper at once, after which she insisted on my going to bed, although I would rather have waited to see my cousins, who were still playing on

the beach. But aunt said they had not expected me to arrive so early, and that they would not be home till seven o'clock; so I yielded, as I really was very tired, and it did not take me long to go to sleep, I can tell you.

I slept like a top all night, and, as you may imagine, the first thing I thought of when I woke the next morning was the sea. I slipped on my dressing-gown, and ran straight from my bed on to the balcony to have a good look at it, and do you know it had turned green whilst I was asleep. How nice it would be to be able to swim quite easily! I always did mean to be a great swimmer, but I don't feel quite so sure of my courage as I did. The bath I shall have to jump into this time is really so very big, I shall feel like one of the little microscopic creatures with the long names which our professor of physiology showed us at college. Some day I mean to tell you the names of all the islands on the coast about here. I think travelling is a very nice way to learn geography, don't you, mamma?

I wrote all that to you out on my balcony, mother dear, and just as I had finished, nurse came in, with Griffin and Fido at her heels.

"What are you thinking of, Robert?" she exclaimed. "Your cousins are up, and waiting to see you. You are in a pretty costume for receiving visitors!"

I am afraid you would have been rather vexed with

me, if you had seen me sitting in the balcony in my dressing-gown and slippers, when I ought to have been ready for breakfast; but after nurse spoke to me I made all the haste I could, and as I wished to make a favourable first impression, I greased my hair well, cut my nails, and, to crown all, put on the new violet necktie you gave me. I was just slipping up the gold ring which belonged to dear papa, when there was a knock at the door, and how my heart did beat! If you had been there, I would have let you go first to speak to my visitors; but as I was alone, I was obliged to put a bold face on the matter, and said, "Come in!"

They came in: first, uncle and aunt, looking as kind and nice as ever; then Bertha, who is eleven years old and has long golden hair; then Gustav, who is two years older than his sister, and is a little, *but not much*, taller than I am. He looks a great deal stronger, though, and is as brown as a berry. I want to be as sunburnt as he is: it is much more manly than to be as pale as I am. I really look just like a little girl, which is horrid. How I will swim, if it's rolling about in the water which gives one such a fine healthy colour as Gustav's!

Everybody made much of me, and Gustav and I are sworn friends already. As for the other boys, George and Henry, they are still mere children—George only nine, and Henry only seven years old.



CHAPTER VI.

MY NEW FRIENDS — MY COWARDICE — CRABS — SHRIMPS.

Here I am, quite accustomed to my new life, mamma; and I feel as if I had known my cousins a long time. Bertha is very nice, and very brave for a little girl. She can join in our games quite well, and has struck up a great friendship with Fido, who follows her about everywhere, which is not much wonder as she constantly caresses him, and always has some crumbs of cake to give him. Little girls are much kinder to animals than we boys; they pet them when *we* should tease them, so of course animals prefer girls.

This morning we went to see Father Neptune, who, it seems, is a bathing man and teacher of swimming, besides a fisherman, postman, and carrier. He lives

in a little cottage adjoining uncle's house. Gustav introduced me to him, and, though he did not speak, he smiled pleasantly under his thick tawny beard.

His grandson Peter and my cousin Gustav are a great deal together. Peter is the same age as I am, but he is not so tall. He seems to be as agile as a cat, though, and he is even more sunburnt than Gustav. He began talking to me and playing with me at once, as if we were old friends.

If there were any *designers*—as Father Neptune calls painters—about here, I would have a picture made for you of Peter and his little sister Marianne. Peter, as I have already said, is as brown as an Arab, but he has light curly hair, cut quite short, and he always wears a little old blue cap, which looks very pretty. His shirt is red, and his cloth trousers are fastened up by a bright blue band, which passes over his shoulders like our braces. He never wears any boots, but tells me he has a grand pair of shoes with laces, as well as some thread socks, for Sundays.

His sister Marianne is such a handy little workwoman. Fancy! although she is only ten years old, she looks after her grandfather's house and does everything for him. She gets the meals ready, cleans the house, and takes care of the little pig. Peter helps her with the heavy work; fetches the water from the mountain spring, gives the refractory pig an occasional bath, and



PETER MOVES THE BIG SAUCEPAN. Page 51.

moves the big saucepan or kettle; but Marianne does everything else herself.

I am never tired of watching the two: Marianne is such a tidy little soul, and goes to work with such hearty good-will. It is fun to see her sweeping away at the door of her house with a broom no taller than herself, as the handle is broken; or peeling the potatoes for dinner faster than I could count them. Her costume is not much more complicated than Peter's; she wears a short red frock, a good deal faded, made high up to her throat and with white sleeves, a big blue apron, and, to crown all, a cap such as Susan might put on on cleaning days, which makes Marianne's young little face look so funny. She doesn't wear shoes or stockings any more than Peter, except on Sundays. Do you know, I think the peasant women here, with their red petticoats and blue aprons, would come out capitally in a picture; anyhow, they look very nice and bright in real life.

I am very glad that Father Neptune and Peter are such near neighbours of ours. Gustav may go to them whenever he likes, and as uncle can't always be with us on the beach, Father Neptune often takes his place.

I have just told the brave old sailor that I mean to learn to swim, and he has promised to give me my first lesson. I am very glad that the time for learning is

so near, but I can't help a little feeling of trepidation. It was so very different when the bathing-place was our dining-room floor. But this is in confidence, you know, mother dear—mind you don't tell any one, for I shall soon conquer my fears, I hope. Uncle and Gustav say that as I am so active I shall most likely swim well. I hope I shall, and I mean to come back to you very strong and sunburnt; in fact, I believe I am getting brown already.

To own the honest truth, mother dear, I haven't been at all brave!

I told you this morning I was glad to be going to take my first lesson; but for all that, when Father Neptune came and seized hold of my hand to lead me into the sea, I felt a cold chill come over me, and I was obliged to bite my lips to keep from crying. I was trembling all over, and my teeth were chattering with fright as I followed Neptune; and when we got to the edge of the water, I drew back a little and said, in a pleading voice,—

"*Please* take Gustav first."

He tossed up his head, and giving me a friendly slap on the shoulders, shouted in a thundering voice,—

"Gustav!"

Gustav ran down at once, and I slid off towards the rocks. On, on I went, taking no notice of the repeated calls of "Robert! Robert!"—never once so much as

turning my head to see if any one was following me. When I was out of sight of the others, I set to work to hunt crabs, and I caught a great many.

I did not go back until the tide was so low that there was no fear of my being again asked to take a bath. I felt very much ashamed of myself, as you may imagine; but I tried hard to assume an air of indifference.

"Why did you not want to take your lesson, Robert?" said aunt. "We kept calling after you at the top of our voices."

"Robert has a passion for crabs, mamma," cried Gustav, kindly trying to cover my confusion. "When he sees one set off running, I believe he would follow it to the other end of the world."

"He must have his first lesson to-morrow, then," said aunt.

"Yes, to-morrow," I repeated, beginning to cough.

So you see I got out of the difficulty very well, and as Neptune never says anything, perhaps they will all go on thinking I really went off after crabs. Of course I am glad that they should think that; but I don't mind telling you, mamma, that I was frightened, frightened to death, and I still feel a bit of a coward about to-morrow.

But I remember reading in my history about our brave king, Henry IV., who could not help trembling

on the battle-field, but who was, for all that, ready to throw himself into the thick of the struggle, and fought none the worse for his trembling. I will be like Henry IV., and when Father Neptune comes to-morrow, I will follow him, fear or no fear.

My cowardice has made me feel rather out of spirits, but I am glad I caught such a lot of crabs. Crabs were the first sea-creatures with which I became acquainted. It amuses me very much to see them making their way in a sidelong fashion towards the pools of water in the sands. It's easy enough to catch them, and this is the way we go to work. When they don't run in our way of their own free will, we lift up the fringe of sea-weed hanging over the pools in which the crabs are lying, pick one out, holding it daintily between our thumb and first finger, and in spite of its kicking, fling it into our basket. The big crabs have rather formidable pincers, and to-day, when we were playing on the beach, I saw a poor woman who was gathering sea-weed with her little boy playing beside her, seize a crab, and hold it up for the child to look at. Amused at its struggles, he stretched out his arms for it, but before giving it to him, the mother broke off the large front claws. I did not like to see the child playing with the poor mutilated creature, so I turned away. Uncle says that crabs are of great importance in this part of the world, and serve as food for the poor people.

He told me, too, that they change their shells sometimes, and he made me notice the way in which their limbs are jointed. I asked him why their eyes stick out in such a funny fashion, and he said that was to enable them to see in every direction. Do you know, mamma, the stalks their eyes grow on can move! How funny we should look if our eyes were at the end of stalks too; and we moved them about from one place to another, like uncle does the small end of his telescope! Crabs are capital playthings, too. At this minute I see Peter making four walk abreast, and another child whirling one round in the air by a string tied to one of its claws. Rather a cruel amusement, I think. I should not like to treat anything alive like that, though I do enjoy the excitement of hunting the crabs into their pools, and watching their bright eyes and brown shells glittering through the wet sea-weed.

Shrimping is great fun, too. It is easy enough to catch the crabs in their pools; but it's quite another matter to get hold of shrimps, for they jump to such a distance, and are so small and airy, that they slip through your fingers just as you think you have got them.

Have you ever seen a live shrimp, mamma? Do you know, I thought my cousins were hoaxing me at first, when they showed me some little creatures which I took for transparent grasshoppers, and told me they

were shrimps. You know I had only seen the red ones we have for tea at home sometimes, and I could scarcely believe that the pretty little crystal-like creatures with long whiskers were the same. This evening, however, aunt let us cook what we had caught ourselves, and as I watched my colourless transparent victims changing into solid red shrimps in the boiling water, I was convinced. We fished for them with nets stretched on a piece of wood at the end of a pole, which we pushed before us in the water. Of course we took off our shoes and stockings and turned up our trousers to begin with. You should have seen the sly little fellows bury themselves in the sand as the enemy approached, giving a saucy little whisk to their tails as they disappeared. Truth to tell, I did not catch many, for twice a wave turned my net right over, and let all the shrimps out. Gustav and Peter managed much better.

I like everything here, mamma, everything, only I wish to-morrow were over. I wish I had learnt to swim!

I *have* swum, mamma; I have conquered my cowardice! I was determined to show no fear this morning, but it was only my pride which kept me up, for I felt nearly as nervous as ever when I saw Father Neptune coming, and I am afraid I did tremble a little.

"Wait a bit, little master," he said; "Peter is

coming," thinking, I suppose, that his grandson's presence would reassure me. So it did, and when he added, "Play about a little in the shallow water until the tide comes in," we all ran into the little waves, and began paddling about and splashing each other in great delight. But presently, Father Neptune suddenly seized me by the waist, and plunged me into a big wave. I did not scream, mother, for I lost my breath, but I felt as if I had the cramp in all my limbs, and I puffed and blowed like a seal or a porpoise. But as soon as I recovered from the first shock, I was ready to try and swim. Neptune held me up by the waist with his strong hand, and I imitated the gestures of Gustav and Peter as best I could. I succeeded very quickly. With three good swimmers near me, and one hand on Neptune's brown shoulder, I struck out quite bravely. The others applauded; I grew bolder. I made an attempt alone, and although I drank a good deal of salt water, I did not do at all badly. Father Neptune carried me back to the beach on his back, and as he set me down, he said,—

"You will make a good swimmer, little master."

Four hours later I had another lesson, and I have quite done with trembling now.

Gustav is very kind: he keeps near me and helps me with his advice.

You would be pleased to see me now, mamma. I

look so much better than I did, and I lead such a healthy life. I get up quite early in the morning, go to bed early, sleep like a top, and eat for a dozen. The sea-air gives one a ravenous appetite. I am still a little pale beside Peter and Gustav, but I am much browner. I caught sight of my face in a pool this evening, and I looked quite dark. I assure you I did.





CHAPTER VII.

MORE NEW FRIENDS — RICOCO — THE PONY, PRINCE — THE MOUSE-HUNTER — OUR FORT.

I HAVE been obliged to put aside my journal for two days, mamma, we have been travelling so much by land and by sea. Father Neptune always takes us either in the holiday waggon uncle and I came in, in his old fishing-boat, or in a dainty little vessel uncle sometimes hires.

We are getting fonder and fonder of old Neptune and his grandson Peter. We go to see them very often. You know I told you their cottage is next door to our house, and from my balcony at this minute I see Father Neptune smoking his pipe on his bench in the open air whilst Marianne is busy at the fire inside. Beyond their cottage is one belonging to a poor fisherman, and every evening I hear his

wife teaching her little child to say his prayers. Other sounds which come up into my room often enough are the grunting of a little pig in a stable behind Neptune's house and the cry of Ricoco.

"But who is Ricoco?" I hear you exclaim. Well, he is an old parrot which Neptune brought home with him from his travels thirty years ago. He is not very big, but very pretty. His body is of a grass-green colour, his head of a whitish grey, and his tail is light green. He has some purple feathers at the top of his wings which look like brilliant epaulettes, and a kind of red and blue plumage at the end, which is beautiful when it is spread out. Bertha is very fond of him, and is always giving him some dainty tit-bit. I like to watch him walking solemnly backwards and forwards on an old mast stretched across Father Neptune's garden, but except for that I don't take much notice of him.

But I will tell you what I *do* like, and that is the pony, Prince. I must introduce him to you, mamma. He is such a strong, patient, intelligent fellow. He really surprises me, and I only wish I were half as docile as he is. When he is yoked to the little cart he draws, he obeys every look of Neptune's. It is enough for him if his master knits his brows. He understands him directly. You know Father Neptune is the carrier of the whole district, and fetches and

carries parcels by sea as well as by land. He goes to town with Prince, and comes back laden with packages of all sorts and sizes, the pony stopping where they are to be delivered without any apparent hint from his driver, and, however long Neptune may leave him, he never budges an inch or shows the slightest sign of impatience.

You would think from all this that he must be an old horse. No such thing; he is quite a pretty young black pony; a little thin, it is true, but very strong and full of spirit. He takes us up such steep hills, and nurse thinks there never was such an animal as he is. I must explain, however, that one reason for Susan's favourable opinion of Prince is that Fido and Griffin are leading her a pretty dance just now. Fido is afraid of the sea, and nothing will induce him to take a bath; but the sea-air seems to intoxicate him, and he rushes about, barks, and tugs at nurse's petticoats to make her follow him, in a way that convulses us with laughter. One afternoon he nearly dragged her over a cliff. We were walking quietly along and he was gamboling on in front, when he suddenly dashed back, caught at Susan's parasol, which was hanging loosely in her hands, and, as her fingers mechanically closed over the handle, the mischievous little fellow tore so vigorously at the other end with his sharp teeth that the poor old lady, in her struggle to keep hold of her

property, lost her balance and rolled over and over till she was fortunately stopped by a rock. The cliff we were walking on was not very high, it is true, but nurse might have been killed if she had fallen on to the sharp stones below; as it was, she was a good deal bruised and shaken, and as we helped her up she shook her fist at Fido, who had retired to a distance with his booty, and said, —

"You little ungrateful wretch! you'll have no more tit-bits from me."

Griffin's transgressions have been scarcely less enormous than Fido's. At Paris, as you know, he was a quiet, reserved, gentlemanly cat enough; but at St. Pierre he leads a life unworthy of an animal of his education. He slips through Susan's fingers and goes off to watch the mice in the garrets, even climbing on to the roof sometimes, and he affects the society of all the lean, thievish-looking, half-starved cats of the neighbourhood. These propensities greatly shock our worthy old nurse, who cannot understand where her pet got his low tastes, and I think she rather wishes she had left him with the landlady at home, where he would have dozed away his time curled up on his old green footstool.

"That cat will never be what he was," says poor Susan, every now and then, with a deep sigh of regret.

All these little scenes make Gustav and me laugh heartily; but George, Henry, and Bertha take things more seriously, and resort to all manner of unworthy subterfuges to keep Griffin at home. They are very fond of him, and, besides, would do anything to please nurse, who is very kind to them all, tells them stories, makes a fuss if they hurt themselves ever so little, and will watch them at play, no matter where they may be, for any length of time without getting impatient. The little ones are very brave and sturdy, but of course they can't always be with us big ones, and they are not allowed to go beyond the cape which runs out to sea in front of our house. Indeed, at low tide it is quite as much as their short legs can manage to walk to the head of it. This cape has a very long Breton name which none of us can pronounce, so we call it the Dyke Cape because we build dykes on it; and, with uncle to direct us, we have raised quite a number of military defences against the inroads of the sea. Uncle is the engineer, we are the builders, and the children are our apprentices.

We dig in the sand with our little wooden spades, often using our hands and feet to get on quicker; we dig trenches, throw up glacis behind them, build parapets and turrets which tower above our minor works, constructing everything on the most scientific principles, so that nothing is wanting except solidity,

which one can't expect to have in fortifications built of sand. The works look splendid until the arrival of the treacherous sea. We retire behind our defences; we watch the waves slowly coming nearer and nearer. First our trenches fill with water, and we know from the change in the colour of the sand of which our glacis is formed that the foe is busy undermining our fort. The subterranean attack stealthily proceeds; our outpost noiselessly sinks before it. Presently a little wave makes a breach in our parapet; we rush forward; we fling sand and pebbles into the weak place; uncle, Bertha, everyone hurrying to the rescue. In vain—a mighty billow, with uplifted crest, is advancing; it flings itself into the very heart of the citadel; the walls crumble; they fall in; the sea passes triumphantly over all our fortifications, and retires after levelling everything in its path.

As Peter spent this morning with us, we determined to try and erect a real fort, not of sand, but of stones. It was a grand undertaking, and it was a great deal of trouble to collect our materials, which consisted of pebbles and fragments of rock.

We began, of course, by working out our lines of circumvallation, which means digging the outside trench of our proposed defences. We made a very wide circuit, suitable to the magnitude of the undertaking we had in view. It took us two whole hours,



BERTHA MAKING A VERY PRETTY LEADER. Page 65.

and we all, Gustav, Peter, George, Henry, Bertha, and even Susan worked with hearty good-will.

When our trench was dug we at once proceeded to erect the bulwarks of our fort behind it. Uncle left us to do everything ourselves, to see if his lessons in the art of construction had been properly understood.

Gustav and I had drawn the plans beforehand, and concocted a kind of truck of planks on which to drag our materials to the site of our fortress. When the truck was loaded, Bertha, Henry, Gustav, and I tugged it over the sand with great difficulty, Bertha going first and making a very pretty leader. As soon as we had got big stones enough we left the little ones to go backwards and forwards for sand and small pebbles, whilst we elders began the erection of the works.

We took the greatest pains, and really our masonry was by no means despicable. Damp sand served us for mortar, and even uncle seemed to think our little dyke might escape destruction for this one day at least.

Would it resist the first wave?—that was the question! We finished our work long before the tide began to come in, and hoisted a large flag aunt made for us in the centre. Now we have to wait to see the result of all our labours, and I have been writing this just to pass the time. Gustav and I can't help hoping that it—I mean our fort—may last out one tide at

least—but the children seem to expect that it will last for ever. When we consulted Father Neptune, he smiled under his beard, but we could not get a word out of him.

I hear Bertha running upstairs. I expect she has come to fetch me. I will tell you this evening how everything has turned out. I wonder whether I shall have a bulletin of victory or of defeat to send—anyhow, you shall know everything.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE FATE OF OUR FORT — PETER'S ADVENTURES — SOME SEA-CREATURES — SEA-WRACK — AN INLAND EXPEDITION — BERTHA.

MOTHER, I am not one to publish false despatches; I bravely own our defeat.

The sea is a rough, uncompromising invader. It rushed in, speedily took possession of our domain, and destroyed everything. But I must tell you all about it from the beginning:—As soon as the tide began to come in, we all ran down to the beach. We arranged our sentinels in the trenches and awaited the attack. As usual, the enemy advanced very stealthily, but the sea was rougher than it was yesterday, and the waves looked very big and threatening as they came nearer and nearer. Our advanced works met with the usual

fate: the trenches first became damp, then filled with spray, then covered with water, whilst the earthworks behind them crumbled and fell forwards. At last the waves began to wash the foot of the fort itself, the stones became bright and glittering and kept their places; but I saw the mortar which bound them together change colour and become soft. I rushed to fill up the interstices with fresh sand, the others did the same, running away with the waves at our heels. Again they washed up, this time carrying a few loose stones with them in their retreat; again we hurried to the rescue, but it was all in vain—all in vain—wave succeeded wave, and at last there was nothing left to do but to stand and watch the gradual falling to pieces of our beautiful building. For a long time the top of the wall and the flag still appeared above water, looking down, as it seemed, triumphantly upon the defeated enemy. But presently there was a cry from Bertha, and she burst into tears. A huge wave had broken upon our wall, and its masonry was strewn in all directions. The flag floated away, and we never saw it again.

We led Bertha away, who wept bitterly. George and Henry shook their little fists at the sea, and Gustav and I felt anything but proud. Then Father Neptune came to give us our swimming lesson. We bathed, swam about, hunted for rare shells, and tried

to forget our defeat; but as soon as the tide went down we ran to the site of our fort, and found no token of our perseverance remaining but two large stones; all the others had been carried out to sea or buried beneath the sand. Gustav and I sat down upon the ruins, and talked about Marius and the destruction of Carthage. Poor Marius! I never knew before how he felt, and I pitied him with all my heart.

Our failure vexed me a good deal, and Gustav and I agreed to give up building forts on the beach; but George, Henry, and Bertha go on making them with perseverance worthy of a better cause. We leave them to their fruitless efforts, and go off on exploring expeditions with Peter. We have been as far as Cape Cross, so called because on it a large natural cross of stone, about which there has been a great deal of talk, rises above a group of rocks. Cape Cross is a beautiful place; we like going to it immensely, but it is a long way off.

You know how uneven the sea-coast is, don't you? They say the sea wears away the beach. It seems to have bitten great slices of the north of Brittany away, and one cape succeeds another with creeks or bays between. When only a small space has been left between two capes, they call it a creek, and a big one is a bay. See how learned I am getting! but, as I said before, travelling is a capital way to learn geo-

graphy. You know our house is built almost on the beach, and sometimes at high tide the waves dash up to the wall of our garden and sprinkle us with spray when we are in the balconies; but, at low tide, we have a long stretch of sand between us and the sea, and we can go round "Cape Dyke" and several of the capes on either side of it. It's very dangerous, though, to venture far away without a guide, unless you know all about the tides, for they may come in suddenly and imprison you in a bay from which there is no escape except by climbing up quite perpendicular rocks. At quite low tide we see what looks like brownish-green meadows between us and the water; but these green meadows are really quicksands, and none but the boldest peasants venture on them, and when they go, they wear such funny wooden shoes nailed on to a plank. Peter told me that one evening, when he was a little fellow, his father was missing a long time, and that whilst his mother was busy he ran down to the beach to look for him. Presently he thought he saw him close to the water, and he went after him; but before he had gone much beyond Cape Dyke he felt the sand giving way beneath his feet, and when he tried to turn back he could not get along at all, the water seemed to be spreading about all round him. So he shouted and clapped his hands as loud as he could, but he could not make the man in the distance hear. Then he got

his coat off, and thought he would try to swim back; but it wasn't any good, for the sand rose higher and higher, and got into his ears and his mouth. He felt suffocated, and was sinking down exhausted never to rise up again, as he thought, when a strong hand seized him, and there stood his father, who had been home, missed his boy, and in his turn come to look for him. A narrow escape, wasn't it, mamma? And another time, Peter and Marianne were nearly drowned together, for they were fishing for crabs in a little creek and forgot all about the tide. The sea had reached the capes on either side before they noticed that their retreat was cut off, and if Peter hadn't been so used to climbing after birds' nests in the cliff, he could not have saved himself or his sister. As it was, he managed to drag himself up to a ledge of rock, just above high-water mark, and then he pulled Marianne up after him. They got wet through, and once a wave dashed right over them, and they had to cling close to the rock lest they should be washed away. Peter said he thought the tide would never, never turn that day; but it did at last, and as soon as their little creek was uncovered again, the two clambered down and made their way home, where nobody had even noticed their absence, as they were supposed to be somewhere about. Peter has had a great many adventures, I can tell you, mamma, and that's what makes him so strong and

brave now. I should like to have some adventures, too, but I should like to be quite sure I should come out of them safe as Peter did.

We always bathe in Dyke Bay, close to the cape of that name, and if we want to go from there to Cape Cross, we have to go right round another promontory, which is about half a mile long.

When we do reach it, we have the Atlantic Ocean itself stretched out before us; and, at low tide, the sands look like a succession of vast rocky steppes covered with a carpet of sea-weed.

At a distance the rocks strewn about look quite flat and smooth, but when you get closer you see they are full of crevasses, and that huge pieces are half detached from them. In spite of their being covered with fringes of sea-weed, you ought to be very sure-footed to climb them; and Gustav and I were nearly down several times when we made our first attempt.

All sorts of queer sea-animals live on these rocks: I saw several different kinds of limpets, and could scarcely believe they were really alive at first, they kept so still, and seemed glued so tightly to the rocks; but presently, when the first little waves of the advancing tide washed over them, I saw them open their shells and put out their long tongues, like ribbons, covered with several rows of hard teeth, with which they seized the sea-weed floating past them. Uncle

told me they keep their tongues folded up in their insides when they are not eating. The fisherwomen here collect them, and use them for thickening their soup or fattening their pigs. They use very sharp knives to cut them away from the rocks. Bertha likes to save the shells to make hats for her doll. They are very pretty indeed when they are polished. We boys have tried ever so many experiments to make those we get ourselves look like those you buy in the shops, but somehow the polish always comes off again after a bit.

What a lot of things there are in the sea, mamma, and what a little I know about natural history, in spite of all I learnt at school! I have never seen any cuttle-fishes yet, although I have looked everywhere, and the fishermen are always crying out at the mischief they do to the haul of small fishes after they are caught. You know, the impudent creatures actually drag the little fishes half through the meshes of the nets and eat them. I dare say they think they are caught on purpose for them. You know I wanted to make some sepia myself,—they say it comes from an ink-bag inside the cuttle fishes. Bertha has the bone of one which was thrown on shore, and when she makes a blot, puts some powder scraped off this bone over the place, and the powder sucks up the ink so that you would never guess a blot had been made.

I see ever so many cockles every day of my life. They have a long foot which they can draw right up into their shells. Sometimes they stretch out this foot, which is bent in the middle, with a sudden jerk, and jump away like a flea. Cockles are very nice to eat: we often have some for tea. I wish I could describe all the sea-anemones to you, they are so beautiful, mamma; and I have tried again and again to save some in a basin of salt water to bring home to you, but they always die, and not one of them has put out his leaves under my care. I have got a dried star-fish for you though, which old Neptune gave me, several rare shells, and some groups of dried sea-weed, which I managed to save with the delicate tendrils all spread out by slipping thick paper under them whilst they were actually in the water. They are rather crooked, but you must not mind that, for you know how crooked the straightest stick looks when you put it in the water, and I could not leave my paper under long lest it should get rotten. Bertha tried to write a pretty piece of poetry under the sea-weed for you, which begins: "Call us not weeds, we are flowers of the sea," but the paper was not quite dry, so all the words ran into each other.

Uncle showed us several different kinds of coral animals too, and told us how members of the same

family build up whole islands in the tropics. The architects of the sea, he called them—was not that a pretty name? He brought some tiny, tiny spiders out with him one day, no bigger than a pin's head, and dropped them into the open mouths of some of the coral animals—madrepores, he said they were. You should have seen how all the arms or tentacles closed over the poor little spiders. I expect they died very quickly, which is one comfort. Uncle told me all these beautiful, flower-like creatures lead a very useful life; for it is their business to eat up the dead animalcula, &c., which would poison the fishes if they were left to rot in the water.

The people here seem almost to live on what comes out of the sea. They use the sea-wrack for fuel, the shell-fishes for food, and they sell the booty their husbands bring home, to buy what is not actually supplied by the waves. We—I mean Gustav and I—are going to help Peter cut sea-wrack to-morrow, for the "harvest" as they call it has begun, and everybody is going to lay in a stock of fuel for the winter. I will tell you all about it when we come home.

Do you know, mamma, Gustav told me to-day that he used to be quite afraid of me. He thought, as I went to college at Paris, that I must know so much; and he says that, if uncle and aunt had listened to him, I never should have been invited here. What a good

thing they did not yield, for we are the best of friends, and Gustav really knows a great deal more than I do. We are just like brothers together, and I hope you will let Gustav come and stay with me some day. I am more than ever determined to work hard next term.

I really don't wonder now that Neptune and Peter are so silent; working as hard as they do is enough to make anyone unwilling to speak. I begin to think it is only lazy people who talk much. I have not many idle words to answer for to-day, for I am quite exhausted with all I have done. We started at daybreak this morning to go and cut sea-wrack, and on our way Gustav told me more of the many things it is used for. When it has been dried on the cliffs, it is carried home and stored away to reappear as fuel for the fires, fodder for the cattle, and manure for the fields. People who are well to do go down to the beach to gather it, and bring it home in rough carts drawn by little ponies like Prince, or by small bullocks.

There is generally one horse or two pairs of bullocks. The drivers take the carts right down into the sea; sometimes the animals are up to their necks in water. Then, when the carts are full, they are slowly drawn up the beach. Sometimes it's really dreadful to see the struggles of the poor animals as they flounder

through the water on the yielding sand; but the worst part is when they come to the steep beach, where the stones roll back upon them at every step. More than once I have seen the poor creatures ready to drop with fatigue, but the instant they show signs of discouragement they are surrounded by the fishermen, their wives, and children, who shout at them, goad them on with pitchforks, and make such a terrible uproar that I often stop my ears. It has the desired effect, however, for the horses or oxen, as the case may be, grow so eager to escape from their tormentors that they struggle on more vigorously than ever. Once off the beach, the tumult ceases; the cart rolls quietly along the smooth road, and the howlers run off to surround some other vehicle.

On the rocks where we were to-day matters were conducted rather more quietly. There were only a number of poor women and children, who tore up the sea-weed with their hands, and carried it away on their heads or shoulders. It's very hard and heavy, I can tell you, mamma, although it looks so pretty and soft when it is growing. We really helped Peter a great deal.

Just now all Father Neptune's time is taken up in making journeys by land with Prince, or expeditions by sea in his old fishing-boat called the *Brilliant*, and Peter has to lay in the winter stock of fuel all by

himself. Next year Marianne says she means to help him, but she is too weak and delicate to be of much use yet.

I liked helping Peter very much, mamma, but I don't mind owning to you that I am quite worn out. I don't complain: it would be very silly of me to grumble when I went of my own free-will, and I assure you I have quite changed my opinion about many things. I see now what real work means, and living with these people has done me good. I will never be idle again. Of course I would rather be a fisherman than do Greek themes, but then, as I am a gentleman, I suppose I must be educated like one, and I have good long holidays for learning gymnastics and that sort of thing. Poor Peter never gets any holidays; he has to work all the year, and he is always more or less tired. He is out in all weathers, up early and late. I admire Peter; I mean to be like him—I mean to work as heartily as he does in my own way.

Did you smell anything very sweet in my last letter, mamma? Did you notice the pretty little pink flowers in the envelope? They were one of my discoveries.

It was so cold and the sea was so rough yesterday, that aunt thought we had better not go down on the beach, and as Neptune and Peter were too busy to



I LIKED HELPING PETER VERY MUCH. Page 7?

attend to us, Gustav and I went off for a walk inland. We slung our satchels at our sides, put on our double-soled shoes, took our mountain staves with us, and set off, bent on having some adventures. Fido went with us, and seemed to resume his old peaceful habits as he got out of sight of the sea. The reaping and threshing of the corn was going on everywhere, and we were kindly greeted at the farm-houses we passed; indeed, we went in to rest at more than one, and were regaled with new milk and delicious bread and cheese. Even Fido came in for a share of the dainties, which made his bad conduct later in the day really quite unpardonable. We had filled our satchels with botanical treasures,—your pinks amongst them, mother,—and were on our way home pretty well tired, as you may imagine, when we suddenly missed Fido. Gustav was for leaving him behind, saying he was sure to come back all right by himself; but I did not feel as if I could face nurse without him, in spite of her assumed indifference to him since the affair of the cliff, so I persuaded Gustav to turn back, and, tired as we were, we retraced our steps for at least a mile, stopping at the farm-houses to make inquiries, and calling "Fido, Fido," till we were hoarse. At last we were obliged to give him up, and when we arrived at our cottage, foot-sore and weary, there sat Fido on the stone at the door, licking his lips with satisfaction over a field-rat

he had captured. That was the only adventure we had after all. Is it any wonder that I don't like Fido as much as I did?

We found the flowers I sent you growing wild in a field close to what they call a dune, which I think means a sandy plain once covered by the sea, but I am not quite sure. I shall ask uncle; he knows everything. There are pink flowers like these growing everywhere; in the clefts of the rocks and in the meadows, but I never took much notice of them till I fell headlong into a tuft of them one day. They smelt so sweet, that I brought home a bunch. I wish I could say I had thought of sending them to you myself, but, if the truth must be told, it was Bertha who made me do it. She crept into my room just as I was closing my letter, and seeing the flowers all tumbling about, she said,—

"Oh, Robert, don't let the poor things die; let me put them in water, it's cruel to bring them home only to wither; and slip these in the letter to aunt—they will make it smell sweet."

Of course I let her have the rest of the flowers, and she arranged them so tastily in a number of little vases, which she set about the tables in the drawing-room. She put one on my mantel-piece; but she made me promise to put it outside the window when I went to bed, for, she said, it was bad to go to sleep with flowers in

your room. Is she not a careful little woman? She is so clever, too! She loops up curtains as prettily as you do, mamma, and you should see what tasty bows she makes of odds and ends of ribbons. Uncle has given her a little feather broom, and she likes nothing better than to dust all the ornaments in the sitting-rooms with it. When I am a man, I should like Cousin Bertha to be my little wife. You wouldn't be able to help loving her, mamma,—everybody does.





CHAPTER IX.

THE PHILOSOPHER OF THE PUDDLES — FIDO BECOMES A HERO — THE STORM — BERTHA'S STORY.

I HAVE got a new name to-day, mamma. The boys have taken to calling me the Philosopher of the Puddles! It does not sound very grand, but I don't mind it. It's a nickname which seems likely to cling to me, though, for even Father Neptune addressed me as Master Philosopher this evening instead of "little master." You will want to know how I gained this distinction. Well, the fact is, I am *very* fond of puddles. I like to sit on a big stone by a pool of salt water, and watch all the little creatures swimming about in it. It amuses me to see the hermit crabs shuffling backwards and forwards, and carrying their

stolen houses with them. They seize the shells of whelks, periwinkles, and other sea-creatures, turn out the owners if they do not eat them, and settle themselves comfortably in their new houses until they grow too small for them, when they move to bigger ones. Don't you wish we could turn out of one house and go into another one as easily as they do? Now and then I see a lobster, or a crayfish, which are very much alike, but I am rather afraid to meddle with them, for Peter nearly had his first finger nipped off one day when he tried to catch a big lobster without using a net. When there are no very big fellows roving about in my pool, I delight in stirring it up suddenly with a stick or my foot, and then it is fun to watch the commotion; away shuffle the crabs, off jump the shrimps, while the little fishes hide beneath the seaweed.

Gustav draws very well, and the other day he amused himself with making a picture of me perched on a rock, with my chin in my waistcoat, my shoulders up to my ears, and my knees drawn up to my nose. Under this caricature he wrote: "The Philosopher of the Puddles." Of course everybody laughed, even Bertha; but she slipped her hand into mine, and whispered, "I hope you don't mind, Robert; we are only in fun, you know."

Gustav does not only make caricatures. He draws

from nature as well, and can make capital pictures of the sea and the rocks, with the fishermen and women crossing the beach, their harpoons, or nets, slung behind them. The women, in their scarlet petticoats and white caps, look very picturesque.

I wanted to draw, too, but I produce nothing but daubs. My boats look as if they had been capsized, and my peasants seemed glued to one spot. I can't think how Gustav makes things look as if they were moving. I am afraid that the truth is, I have not worked hard enough at drawing any more than I have at my books. You know, though, that I really do mean to make up for lost time next term. I mean to catch Gustav up in drawing. I have some talent for it, and we shall see what we shall see. If you meet my master, tell him what I say, and then I shall be ashamed to draw back.

Nurse has just been in for the twentieth time, with a pen in her hand. She wants to know whether I have told you of Fido's grand deeds yet, and I suppose I had better do so without further delay. I shall certainly have no peace till I have related everything.

To proceed: after having philosophised on the stone by my pool until I was tired, I went to join Gustav, who was mooring a little toy-boat, which he has rigged himself with a complete set of sails.

Presently Neptune hailed us. He had just come home with Prince from a round of calls in the neighbourhood, and proposed that we should have a swim. It was rather late in the day, but we all jumped at the proposal, and were soon on Dyke Beach. We had just donned our bathing clothes, and Father Neptune was dipping George and Henry in the waves close to the shore, when nurse, followed by Fido, arrived with our luncheon in a basket.

"Let's give Fido a bath!" cried Gustav; "he looks as if he needed it."

We called to him, and nurse gave him a push to try and make him join the little boys, of whom he was very fond; but the water no sooner wet his paws, than he backed with a howl. I caught him once, and tried to throw him into a wave, but my hands were wet and slippery, and he wriggled out of them like an eel, sprang on my shoulder, and from there jumped with one bound on to a projecting piece of rock. I never saw a dog with such a horror of water. After we had swam about a little, Neptune proposed that we should dive into the deep water, as we are allowed to do now we have become expert swimmers. Gustav had climbed on a rock, and taken what we call a header, before Fido took any notice of us. He was still trembling with fright on his own account, and surveyed us timidly from his vantage ground. When my turn came, how-

ever, and he saw Neptune take hold of me to direct my first plunge, he became very uneasy, barked at us, snarled, and finally jumped down on to the sand.

The deep water was very cold, and I shivered as I clambered on to my rock. "Come," cried Neptune, "we must make haste, or our philosopher will catch cold," and with that, he seized me under the arms, and was about to give me a preliminary dip, when a piteous howl made him stop. Fido, his hair erect, his tail between his legs, had rushed to the edge of the water, and was evidently in an agony of fear lest some harm was going to happen to me. Neptune dipped me—fresh howls—the poor dog seemed beside himself, and howled louder and more piteously than ever. At the third dip he rushed back to the rock he had just left, advanced to the very edge, and moaned like a child in pain.

"Let us see what he will do," said Neptune, and catching me up in his brawny arms, he made as though he would fling me right out to sea.

Now only fancy, mother; the poor dog, who trembles all over at the very sight of the sea, and bites everyone who tries to make him enter it, now flung himself into the water and swam towards us, barking furiously. Neptune was standing on a rock, and had just set me down beside him, when Fido reached us, and began

alternately barking at him and licking me in transports of excitement. Neptune tried to shake the poor creature off; but he got hold of his trousers with his little sharp teeth, and seemed determined not to desist until he had made the old sailor suffer for his treatment of me. To relieve the innocent cause of the excitement from his embarrassment, I jumped into the sea, and swam out some distance. Fido followed me, and not until I landed did he leave my side. You can imagine the fuss that was made with him after that. All his former misdeeds were forgotten; he was petted, caressed, and the best part of our luncheon was bestowed on him; but he was evidently not quite happy until I had all my clothes on again, and we had the greatest difficulty to keep him from flying at Neptune whenever the old man came in sight.

As for nurse, she has quite forgiven Fido for the trouble he caused her, and thinks nothing good enough for him. He is no longer "a little wretch," but an angel, and nothing will do but I must read all I have said about him to all who were present at the scene of the afternoon. Gustav and Neptune think I have done Fido full justice, but Susan still shakes her head, and says: "Ah, well, we shall see; the mistress shall hear the whole truth from me, that she shall."

There has been such a strange sunset this evening. The sky was all streaked with red and purple, and the

sun was blood red. The sea looked dull and gloomy, and Neptune says there's going to be a change in the weather. I hope not, for it has been splendid; ever since I came we have only had one cold day.

When I woke this morning the sky was overcast, and the sea was still of a dull leaden colour. I was leaning over my balcony, looking out, when Neptune passed beneath it and cried, touching his cap, "There's a storm coming, little master!"

I could not help hoping he might be mistaken, and although uncle said at breakfast that we had better not go out, Gustav and I persuaded him to let us run as far as Cape Dyke, as it was so close to the house.

We went, and we were caught in a terrible shower, which wet us to the skin before we could find any shelter. We tried to go back home, but the wind had risen and we positively could not make head against it. At last we crept under a kind of stone table with three legs, which Gustav told me was a dolmen, whatever that may be. I asked uncle afterwards what dolmens were, and he said rough monuments supposed to have been erected hundreds of years ago, but what for nobody knows for certain. Some people think in memory of the dead, others for the offering up of sacrifices. I don't think it much matters, do you, mamma? It seemed to me that on a fine day we might



WE CREPT UNDER A KIND OF STONE TABLE. Page 88



have a picnic and use the dolmen for a table. I proposed it to Gustav, but he laughed and said we should have to bring ladders or we should never be able to reach our food. I never thought of that. I believe even uncle, tall as he is, could have stood under our dolmen. The people here call it the giant's bed, it is such a big one. We stayed under our shelter, which did not protect us much, until there was a slight lull in the storm, and then we rushed home. Aunt wanted us to go to bed at once, but uncle thought a good game at the top of the house would do us more good. Somehow, though, we were not much in the humour to play, and after changing our clothes Gustav took a book and settled himself in an arm-chair in the dining-room, and I came up here to write to you.

For four whole days I have not written a word in my journal, mamma, and I wish I had taken uncle's advice about the good game the other morning. The fact is, Gustav and I both caught cold when we got wet through; but Gustav is strong and threw it off quickly, whilst I, who am still delicate, it appears, had to stay in bed all yesterday and the day before, and have only just got up now. Everybody is very kind to me, but of course it is dreadfully dull not to be able to go out. I don't know what I should have done without Bertha: she is such a dear little nurse, she is never tired of sitting with me and reading to me. She drew the

little picture at the top of this page; it is the church we all go to. I can see it from my window, but I never noticed it until I was ill, because I was always thinking of the beach and the sea, I suppose. Bertha can tell very good stories, it seems. She heard most of them from Neptune, and they are true. She says, once when Neptune's ship was running between Southampton and St. Thomas in the West Indies, a boy about my age came on board who was going to St. Thomas to join his father. He had lost his mother, and had not seen his father since he was quite a little fellow; but he had lived with his grandmother, and she had told him how good and noble his father was. Of course he was very anxious to arrive at St. Thomas, and he told Neptune, to whom he had taken a great fancy, how he meant to be his father's little clerk, and had learnt to do accounts and add up the longest sums without a mistake, "all for the sake of helping father." Every morning he asked the captain when the ship would get to St. Thomas, and the captain often let him look through his telescope to see if any land was in sight. The passengers too were all interested in him, he was so bright and happy; so eager that everybody should know how lucky he was to have such a father as he knew his to be. Well, at last, Arthur—that was his name—really saw land through the telescope, and not long after that the ship

cast anchor in the bay of St. Thomas. How anxiously Arthur looked at the houses of the town as their shining roofs gleamed beneath the tropical sun, wondering which was his future home. He had often seen a picture of it: he knew it stood high up on one of the hills, and was surrounded by tall waving palms. But his attention was soon distracted from the houses by the excitement on the beach: crowds of black men had assembled and were pushing off in little boats to come out to the ship, bringing oranges, cocoa-nuts, bracelets, fans, and other odds and ends for sale. Presently Arthur saw several gentlemen get into a boat—could one of them be his father? The boat came nearer and nearer, it stopped by the side of the *Neptune*, the gentlemen came up the ladder. Arthur grew sick with excitement; he turned away his head, he could not look. The captain, passing at that moment, patted his shoulder and said: "Well, my little man, you won't need my telescope this time,—father's near enough for you to see him now." Arthur looked up; the four gentlemen were taking no notice of him—no, they had joined another party—the captain, too, had passed on. His father—Mr. Gordon—had not come yet. "But when did he come?" I cried, interrupting Bertha; "he ought to have gone at once. How could he keep him waiting?"

"Oh, Robert," said Bertha, "that is the worst of it.

He never came at all, and all day long Arthur stood and watched for him."

"But why, why did he not come?" I cried.

"Because" said Bertha, bursting out crying, "because he was dead!" He died of yellow fever the very day before the *Neptune* arrived; and in the evening, when the captain and nearly all the passengers had gone on shore, a man came on board and asked for Arthur Gordon. "Here I am, here I am," cried poor Arthur, rushing forward. "Are you—are you"—he was going to say "my father?" but a glance told him he had never seen the stranger or even his portrait before. Neptune was winding up a rope close by, and he heard the man say: "Well, if you're Arthur Gordon, I've come to tell you Arthur Gordon, senior, died yesterday, and the best thing you can do is to go back to England, for there's nothing for you to do here." On hearing this, Arthur nearly fainted away, and a lady passenger who was sitting by came forward and led the poor child down into the saloon, where she tried all she could to comfort him. Neptune said he asked the man why he didn't break the news more kindly; but he seemed to think he had done his duty, and went back to the land without seeing Arthur again. The next day the captain made inquiries, and found that the news was true. He heard, too, that Arthur's father was himself only a clerk, and had left

no money for his little son. The captain gave him a free passage back to Southampton, and what became of him after he landed Neptune had never heard.

Writing all that to you, mamma, made the time pass very pleasantly, and to-day I may go out again. Gustav is calling me now.





CHAPTER X.

GRIFFIN'S BAD CONDUCT — JOHN AND ALLIE — BERTHA'S SHOP — A TERRIBLE PROPOSITION.

When Gustav and I got down to the beach we found nurse and Bertha there before us, and in a great state of excitement about Griffin, who had caught and strangled a big water-rat before their very eyes.

"I can't understand it!" exclaimed Susan. "A cat which, in Paris, would not go out of his way for all the mice in the world, has now become a regular savage, preying upon everything he sees and gobbling up his meat raw—he's a regular glutton, that's what he is."

"And he used to be so gentle," echoed Bertha. "When first he came he would put his velvet paw in my hand, and purr with delight if I stroked him."

"*I* shall take no further notice of him!" cried nurse.

"Nor I," added Bertha, turning away with a sigh.

So Griffin was left entirely to himself, and I very much doubt, mamma, whether you will ever see him again. The fact is, the open life he leads here must be much more natural to him than remaining in-doors as he did at Paris; and uncle scolds Bertha for being so hard upon the poor creature for following his instincts. "But he killed the rat, papa," urged Bertha, as if that were too terrible a deed ever to be forgiven.

"And I daresay the rat had just killed and eaten some other creature for his dinner," said uncle; adding in a teasing voice, "What did you have for breakfast this morning?"

"Only the wing of a chicken, papa, and a new-laid egg," said Bertha, looking at him in surprise.

"Well, all I can say is that it was very cruel of you to eat the poor chicken's wing, and still more to devour a new-laid egg. Why, if you had not done that, the egg would have become a chicken, and the chicken a hen."

But Bertha had run away before uncle had finished his harangue, and I really think, mamma, if you could have seen Griffin's green eyes glare as he tore at the rat, and heard his savage yell when nurse tried to get it from him, you would have quite agreed with my poor little cousin in thinking him unnecessarily savage. I see him now from my window consorting with some

very disreputable-looking cats, perhaps planning some midnight robbery. I can't think where he got his taste for low society.

It's very amusing to hear the way in which nurse speaks of Griffin now: whenever he approaches with an insinuating mew, she turns away her head and walks off with a most comic air of dignified indifference. Gustav has drawn a caricature of Griffin and nurse, which I should like to send you, but he will not let me have it. In it Griffin, dressed up in a tattered old coat and battered hat, is kneeling before nurse sitting bolt upright, on a high-backed chair, with her arms folded before her. The tears are running down Griffin's face, and——

Oh, mamma, whilst I was writing all that nonsense about Griffin something dreadful was happening close by. I broke off, startled by a sudden thump at my door. I ran to open it, and there stood Bertha with flushed cheeks, and eyes full of tears.

"What is it, Bertha?" I cried.

She could hardly speak at first; but she took my hand and tried to pull me down-stairs. Of course I followed her just as I was, without putting on my hat or anything, and by the time we got out of the house she managed to say,—

"There's a poor boy, Robert, who has sprained his foot. He is lying amongst the rocks the other side of

Cape Dyke. He went to pick sea-wrack. He slipped and fell. The tide is coming in—Robert, he will be drowned—I can't find papa—I can't find Gustav—*you* must help me."

On hearing this I ran towards Cape Dyke as fast as ever I could, Bertha behind me as I thought; but as I turned round the corner of the Cape itself, I looked behind me to ask Bertha to show me exactly where the boy had fallen, and she was gone! Imagine my astonishment!—for one moment I thought she had played me a trick, but the next I remembered her tears—her distress—no, the poor boy must be somewhere near, and as I saw the big waves rolling up, I knew there was no time to be lost, and that I must not wait for Bertha. Presently a faint sob gave me a notion which way to go, and clambering over the slippery rocks I soon saw the poor child leaning back against a quantity of sea-weed, making a kind of pillow. I guessed Bertha had bolstered him up like that before she ran home. He was not so big as Peter, and he looked dreadfully pale and ghastly. I was soon kneeling beside him, asking him if he could get up. He only groaned and shook his head, pointing to his foot. Even I could see it wasn't only sprained, but broken.

I told him at least to try and climb on my back, and I would carry him to the shore. He brightened up at

that, and I bent down so that he could put his arms round my neck; but directly I got up he gave such a scream of pain, that I staggered and nearly fell myself. I set him down again and looked at his foot; it was terribly swollen, and the loose trousers he wore seemed quite tight for the wounded leg. He had no shoes or stockings on; you know I told you the peasants only wear them on Sunday. I took out my knife and cut the leg of his trousers up to the knee. He said, "Thank you, little master," and was settling himself back against his seaweed, when I saw that the tide was coming in fast.

"You must get up," I said; "you must get beyond that rock," and I pointed to a rock just beyond high-water mark, "or we shall both be drowned."

He looked behind him then, and I think for the first time saw the danger he was in, for he cried,—

"Oh save me, little master—there's nobody but me!"

I did not find out what he meant by that till afterwards, but I knelt down again beside him, and he climbed on to my back, and though he sobbed and moaned as I took the bad leg under my arm, he gave no more screams. I managed to make a kind of rest for the foot with one hand and staggered along a little way, but the sand was becoming moist, and a terrible fear came over me that the sea would catch us up. The boy was very heavy. I am not very strong, but if

I had been much weaker I shouldn't have stopped to rest then, I can tell you. I must confess though, mamma, that once a horrid, horrid, thought came into my mind. It was—it was—that if I set the boy down and ran to the beach alone, there would be no danger for me at least. Don't think your Robert wicked and ungenerous for that, mamma; it was only for a minute I thought it, and I had put it quite out of my head, and was going to lean against a big rock for a minute, to rest, and gather up my strength to run the rest of the way, when I saw—oh, mamma! what do you think? I saw—something which made me give a shout of joy and set off at a brisk pace, forgetting how tired I was and how I was shaking the poor boy. It was Father Neptune running towards us, leading Prince, whilst Bertha, perched on a stone, was clapping her little hands with delight that he was in time. I knew where she had gone then. She had remembered that Neptune and Prince would be on their way home about the time we started for the beach, and she had run to meet them, and tell them of the danger we were in. Dear, good Bertha! Was I not right in what I said about her?

I was soon perched on Prince's back, and the little peasant was carried tenderly up to our house in Neptune's arms. When we reached Bertha, I made room for her on Prince's back, and held her on before me as I have seen uncle hold little Henry. When I whispered

to her, "You saved us both, Bertha," she said, "No, Robert; somebody whispered to me, 'Run and meet Neptune—the tide is coming in fast—fast—faster,' and all the way I went I heard the words fast—fast—faster."

They made up a little bed for *my boy*, as I called him, in the corner of my room, and Peter went off on Prince to fetch the doctor as soon as ever Bertha and I dismounted.

It turned out that the poor child had broken his leg, not his foot, just above the ankle, in two places, and was not likely to be able to walk for many weeks. He bore the setting very bravely, and when it was over, he said to the doctor, "Thank you, sir;" and then to Neptune, in a queer kind of *patois*, "Now carry me home, please."

"And where might home be, pray?" inquired Father Neptune, making me a sign to be quiet when I was going to protest against "my boy's" being moved.

"Just the other side of Cape Cross," said the boy.

"And what is your name?" added Neptune.

"John," was the only reply.

"Is that all?" inquired the doctor.

"All except Allie—there's only Allie and me."

"Do you mean that Allie's your name, too?" I cried, unable to keep silent any longer.

"No! Allie, that's my sister; let me go to her,

little master—she'll be fretting after me, she will—there's nobody but me."

At this the doctor protested against his patient being excited; but when he found the child could not rest whilst uneasy about "Allie," whoever she might be, he turned us all out of the room, and said he would try and get at the rights of the matter.

Would you believe it, mamma? When the good old doctor came down-stairs, where we were all anxiously waiting to hear the truth, he was wiping his spectacles, and his eyes were full of tears.

He says the boy's name is John Morun, that both his parents are dead, and that he lives alone with a sister, a year younger than himself, in a little hut on the cliff near Cape Cross. We must often have passed it without taking any notice of it. "It seems," says the doctor, "that the boy earns money by collecting sea-wrack, and doing odd jobs for the fishermen; and the girl makes shell baskets and sells them in the little villages near by. I dare say the fisher-folk help them too—they are kind-hearted people about here."

After this there was a grand consultation: Peter was sent off to tell Allie of the accident, and bring her to Father Neptune's cottage, and Gustav, Bertha, and I proposed all manner of schemes for helping them whilst John was laid up.

"I know what I shall do," said Bertha, before we

separated for the night, "I shall collect all my treasures and set up a stall on the beach to-morrow morning—you both must come and buy, and all the money I get shall be for John and Allie."

Everybody laughed at this grand plan of Bertha's; but it was not only nonsense, for the next morning when we came down to breakfast she was already at work, and had a tray on the sideboard covered with shells, pincushions, dolls' clothes, and all manner of odds and ends, including a little coral heart and necklaces, which we all knew were very dear to Bertha. Uncle added a large parcel of sweets and aunt a pile of cakes, so that Bertha's stall really looked very tempting. She chose a shady nook on the beach, and, to make everything complete, Marianne lent her a cap and a big collar like the peasant-women wear, and borrowed an old fish-stall from a neighbour. Peter scrubbed it till it shone, and altogether Bertha's "rig-out," as Gustav called it, was very complete. Only fancy! a lady and gentleman actually took her for a real peasant girl selling things, and asked the price of the coral necklace. We boys came to listen to what she would say. She blushed a little and looked shy, and then she said, in her pretty lady-like manner, "Anything you like, ma'am; the money is to go to a poor little girl whose brother has hurt his foot."



THIS DEALER IN SHELLS IS BERTHA. Page 102.

It was sober earnest to Bertha, whatever it might be to us. The lady looked surprised and laid down the necklace; but she bought a shell pincushion, and Bertha looked quite proud of her sixpence. Then Gustav and I came to buy. I spent the last shilling of the five you gave me, mamma, in buying Bertha's necklace; she winked away a tear as she gave it me. I mean to make her take it back before I come home. Gustav bought all the cakes and sweets, and then made Bertha give up shop for the rest of the day. We fetched Peter and Marianne and Allie to share our feast; but Allie saved half of all we gave her for John.

Bertha gave the three shillings she had earned, and a bright silver threepenny, with a hole in it, to uncle, to give to John and Allie, and uncle kissed her, and called her a "bonnie little maiden."

Mamma, I thought he would have praised her more; but she seemed quite satisfied, and ran off to fetch a beautiful picture-book to show to John. She is sitting beside him now, with Allie busy at her pincushions at a little table near. They would make a pretty picture, and, if I could draw well enough, I would show you how they look.

Uncle has been looking rather grave the last day or two, and this morning he said:

"Do you know, boys, it is now three weeks since you have done any work? Gustav, you must get

your 'Cæsar's Commentaries' out again, and let me have a page or two every day. I shall myself give you some lessons in geography and natural history. Robert can do as he likes about joining you."

Gustav did not seem to approve of this proposition at all; and Bertha, who is a great pet of her father's, sidled up to him, and whispered—

"Let them have another week; it's such beautiful weather, it will be horrid for them to have to stop indoors."

"Nobody wants them to stop indoors," said uncle, smiling. "They can take 'Cæsar' out with them; it will not be the first time he has been in these parts. I daresay he has marched over the site of this very house, with his shield on his arm and his sword stretched out." And then, turning to us, he added: "Did you imagine you were going to lead this lazy life for two months?"

Gustav heaved a deep sigh, and said, "We hoped to."

"That was very unreasonable," said aunt, who had just joined us. "But when were children ever reasonable?"

"Children!" echoed Gustav indignantly; adding, with a deprecating look at uncle, "You might let us have one month quite free."

"Well, mamma," said uncle, "what do you say to our letting them finish their month in peace?"

Aunt laughed, and nodded her head, at which we all began to clap our hands, shouting:

"Silence gives consent!" and when uncle added, "This day week, then!" we overwhelmed him with thanks. Of course you know, mamma, I never meant to take his offer of doing what I liked while Gustav was at work.

It seems that the curate here has *kindly* promised to give us an hour's Latin lesson every morning. Neither of us will be disposed to presume on his kindness, I expect.

But listen, mamma: this is what uncle meant when he talked of giving us lessons in geography and natural history himself. He says we are to go for a sail with him every other day, and he will point out the chief places of interest as we scud along the coast, by way of teaching us geography; and when we don't go for a sail, he will take us on exploring expeditions, to collect sea-creatures for a big aquarium he is going to buy, and objects for the microscope. In the evening he will teach us how to mount the tiny animalcula, and let us look at them. He will take us, too, to see the antiquities of the neighbouring villages, and tell us all about them. Now we are eager to begin our lessons with him, but he laughs at us, shrugs his shoulders, and says:

"You might let me have one month quite free."

So we have eight days to wait; but, never mind, we can amuse ourselves as we did before, and there are John and Allie to look after. John seems likely to get better very quickly; he is to be moved to Neptune's cottage to-morrow. Aunt thinks he will be happier there, amongst his equals.





CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST LESSON IN GEOGRAPHY — THE REFRACTORY COLT — OUR COSTUMES.

We have been so busy amusing ourselves this last week, mamma, that I have not had any time for writing in my journal. John and Allie are gone back to their own little hut, and a neighbour is going to see after them. They were so delighted, when uncle gave them the money Bertha had collected for them! Allie said some of it would buy a shrimping-net, which they have wanted for ever so long.

We have just had our first lesson in geography from uncle. Neptune was too busy to go with us for a sail, so a big tent was pitched on the highest point of the cliff, and uncle sat at a round table, on which were several maps, and a Guide to Brittany bound in red.

Aunt sat behind him with her embroidery, and Bertha on a stool at her feet, with a basket of sea-weed on her knees, which she amused herself with sorting. Gustav and I sat at the table, with our note-books and pencils ready in our hands. We had not much need to take notes, though, for what uncle told us was like a story, and I don't think I shall ever forget it. He began by drawing us a little map of Normandy and Brittany, with the rivers and mountains complete, but no names anywhere; and he said, before we left Brittany, he wanted us to make little maps like his, and fill in all the names from memory. It sounded very difficult; but then he told us something like a story about each place, to make us remember it. First, he gave us a history of what Brittany used to be like. It seems the sea once covered the very ground on which St. Pierre is built, and ever so many of the inland mountains were islands like Mount St. Michael; and only think, mamma, uncle says that some day, when Neptune can spare us a whole morning, we shall go to St. Michael's Mount. There is a huge embankment running along the north coast of Brittany to keep out the sea; it was made in the Middle Ages. Mount St. Michael is outside the embankment. Hundreds of people have been drowned, or rather buried, in the sands, on their way to or from Mount St. Michael, which used to be called the "Mount of the Perils of the Sea." Accidents

often happen now. You won't care for me to tell you everything uncle taught us; besides, most likely you know it already. It was great fun when he made us take imaginary journeys, saying, "Now, Gustav (or now, Robert), let us hear how you got from Nantes to the island of Guernsey, where you stopped by the way, and what adventures you had." Gustav made up all kinds of fun, but I couldn't think of anything to say.

After the geography lesson, Gustav and I had two pages of 'Cæsar's Commentaries' to read and translate. Dry work, and no mistake! but it amuses me to think that the great man may have walked about here before us; and when I saw Gustav strutting about on the sands, with his book in his hand, I called out to him, "Hail, Cæsar!" to which he pompously replied, "Valiant friend and cousin, is it thou?"

I saw a beggar to-day for the first time since I came here. It was a poor old woman, with her back all bent out, whom we met hobbling along as we came out of church. I had spent my last shilling, as I told you; but Gustav gave her a few coppers, for which she seemed very grateful. I never noticed before that there are no beggars about here, as there are in Paris. Uncle says the Bretons are a very independent race, and will not beg unless they are positively obliged; he thinks even this old woman must be a stranger in these parts.

Uncle talks of giving a prize for the best prose composition on Julius Cæsar. We are to have two days to do it in, and Bertha has confided to me that she means to try too. I could hardly help laughing, when she looked up at me with a most serious expression, and said,—

"You know, Robert, I heard all papa told you and Gustav about Cæsar, and I am very fond of writing."

I am not much afraid of Bertha as a rival, and I have given her an old copybook of mine, and my Roman history, to help her. I have no chance against Gustav, though; he is two years older than I am, and much more forward.

I took my books down to the beach this morning, because I thought I should not be likely to be interrupted there. I perched myself on a rock, and set to work on my theme. I had got as far as "Caius Julius Cæsar, born on the 12th July, 100 B.C.," when I noticed a lot of little crabs running across the sand. I could not help just teasing them a bit. When they had all sidled away, I got my pencil out again; but as I raised my eyes for a moment to think of what I should say next, I saw a portly farmer bringing a grey mare and a little brown colt down to bathe. The mother walked into the sea without any hesitation, but the colt seemed to have as much horror of the water as Fido. The peasant, finding all his efforts to entice him into it in



I TRIED TO DRAW THE LITTLE HORSE. Page 111.

vain, tried a manœuvre. He led the colt away from the sea first, and then back by a winding path to a jutting-out promontory of sand. The colt, finding the ground quite firm beneath its feet, ceased to resist, and began sniffing at the sand, kicking up its heels, and finally indulged in a good roll. Meanwhile the tide was rapidly coming in, and before the colt had ceased its gambols the peninsula had become an island. The old peasant and the mare were back on the beach, and when the poor colt looked behind him he saw himself separated from his mother, with nothing but water on every side.

I forgot all about Cæsar in my amusement, and tried to draw the little horse, with his flowing mane and arched neck, on the very page which I had meant to fill with my commentaries. I did not succeed in making a good picture. Under my hands the active, springy little fellow looked as if he were made of wood. Every now and then the old peasant came close to where I was sitting, evidently expecting that the colt would fling himself into the water and swim ashore. But no; it seemed uneasy and restless, but showed no intention of wetting so much as its feet.

Presently I said to the farmer, "What do you mean to do? He will never swim across." "We shall see, sir," replied the man, touching his cap. "What I shall do will depend on what he does. He's a true

Breton, as obstinate as the best of us. He won't go into the water; there's no making him; but I mean to be even with him this time. I expect I shall cure him of his fancies to-day."

"But suppose he should choose to stay on his island till to-morrow?"

The farmer laughed and said, "Why, sir, don't you know that island will be under water in another half-hour? But as I'm in a hurry this morning, I don't mean to wait even for that."

"Oh, I suppose you mean to swim to the island and drive him off it?"

"No such thing. I might have done that when I was your age, sir; it would have been easy enough to me then, much easier than to learn to read or add up sums, but I have other strings to my bow now."

With that he went away, but soon returned, leading the big grey mare by the bridle. The foal caught sight of his mother at once, neighed to her, bounded to the edge of the island, and stood hesitating and trembling with eagerness to get to her. The peasant then walked down close to the sea with the mare, and turning abruptly as the mother was about to dash into the water, he dragged her back again. The poor thing was compelled to follow her master, but she kept looking wistfully back to her child, and as she was disappearing behind a rock, the colt suddenly plunged

into the sea, swam ashore, and bounded to her side.

"Good morning, sir student!" shouted the farmer to me,—"don't forget what you have seen to-day!"

No fear of my forgetting, mother, for I was very much amused and interested. I think it is very nice to see how affectionate animals are sometimes; this colt seems to love his mother as much as Fido loves me. But all this time I did no more of my theme. It is evidently not much use to come out of doors for the sake of being undisturbed. The farmer called me a student! I wonder what I have studied this morning. Oh! I know—the habits of colts in the water for the first time. I wish I had to write a theme on them instead of on Cæsar.

I wonder if I shall be first and get the prize. When I came in this morning I found Bertha in the dining-room, with ever so many big volumes piled up about her. She has written two pages about Cæsar already, and when I began telling her about the colt, she said:

"Oh please, Robert, don't talk to me now, I am so very busy."

Gustav was quite as unsociable. In fact, he was locked up in his own room all the morning, and I believe he was at work on this terrible composition. He said not a word to me about it though, and I took care not to confess my own idleness.

We were out on the beach all the afternoon, and I found a skate's nest. You know what I mean, I daresay; but in case you should not, I must tell you that skates are a kind of fish, and they lay their eggs in stiff horny cases, with a handle at each corner. The children here call them purses and handbarrows. I shall bring mine home to show you.

We are to begin our expeditions with uncle tomorrow, after he has looked at our themes. Mine is scarcely begun; I have to do it now, whilst the others are enjoying themselves on the sands. I must just tell you first that aunt has given us each—I mean Gustav, Bertha, and me—a regular costume to wear on our excursions. Mine is a little loose cloth cloak, with a leather strap to pull it in at the waist, a broad-brimmed straw hat, and a pair of double-soled boots. Besides this, we have each a calabash to drink out of, which Neptune gave us, and a satchel full of biscuits and sandwiches. Bertha is very anxious that we should admire her yellow beach-shoes; she has made a pair exactly like them for Rose, her pet doll, who is to go with us.. The little ones are broken-hearted that they are to be left behind; but there is really no way of managing to take children any great distance from home!



CHAPTER XII.

THE PRIZE—THE START—OUR FIRST CRUISE.

Oh, mother, I am ashamed, literally ashamed, to own that I did not get the prize! I only tried on my travelling costume, after writing to you, before I got out my books, and then I worked as hard as ever I could until bed-time. You will never guess who did get it. Uncle read our themes out loud before breakfast. First Gustav's—then mine—then Bertha's. When I heard Gustav's, I knew it was all over with me; but when Bertha's was read, we boys looked at each other in utter astonishment. It was beautiful, and full of pretty sentences about the races Cæsar had conquered. Bertha had evidently thought about them as well as the great hero and his big army. When uncle said,—

"Well, I am in a fine position now! I never expected a girl to be the winner, and the prize is a fishing-rod!"—Bertha did not seem to understand, and said to Gustav, "Do let me see you put it together."

"The prize is yours, Bertha," said aunt, kissing her—"what will you do with it?"

"Mine!" she cried; "oh, it can't be mine," and when uncle put it into her hands, she held it out first to me and then to Gustav.

"You must take it in turns to use it," she said, and was gone before we could say "Thank you."

Uncle did not scold me for writing such a bad theme: he was as much surprised as we were, that Bertha wrote so beautifully. I heard him say to aunt afterwards, "Our little maiden must be a bit of a genius.

Aunt said, "I hope not!" I wonder why!

The instant breakfast was over we proposed to start, and altogether we made a very big party. Neptune and Peter walked first, then came uncle, Gustav, and I, then aunt and Bertha. We are going some distance along the coast by boat, then we shall land and walk a few miles, leaving our boat at anchor in some bay. We shall stop and dine at any inn or hotel we come to, and suppose we don't come to any, why then we must be content with the provisions in our wallets, which are by no means to be despised.



WE STEERED TOWARDS THE ISLAND OF GAVR'INIS. Page 117.

We steered towards the Island of Gavr'inis, which means the Island of the Goat, and is very celebrated for its antiquities. When we only used the oars we did not get along very fast, for we only had two rowers, one of whom was old, and the other very young and small.

The Gulf of Morbihan seems to be quite full of islands. It is what uncle calls an archipelago, and Neptune says there are as many islands in it as there are days in the year. I don't know about that, but there certainly are plenty scattered about of all sorts and sizes.

How nice it must be to live on an island! The very idea makes my mouth water, and when I am grown up, if you like, we will buy one and live together on it, like Robinson Crusoe and Friday. Bertha says she would like to come too, if you will promise to give her a white goat. I tell her, she shall have a black one and a white one. Then she can act shepherdess to her heart's content. When we had finished talking over our plan of a desert island, she went to aunt and consulted her about a shepherdess' costume for Rose, who will of course accompany her mamma!

I soon had to leave off talking nonsense, though, for uncle expected us boys to be able to tell him the names of all the hills and towns and islands we could see. You know we had learnt them on the map a few days

before. We took it in turns to have the field-glass, and we did not do very badly after all. I really said the right names of a good many islands.

When we came to talk about the antiquities, I did not get on so well. It was Gustav's turn to shine then. You know there are a great many Druid monuments in Brittany. The most famous place for them is Dol, on the north coast, but we saw several as we scudded along in the Bay of Morbihan. I did know the name of the queer, rough, upright stones supporting clumsy slabs. Don't you remember, I told you about the *dolmen* Gustav and I stood under in the storm. Uncle says another name for them is *cromlech*. We are going to land on the island of Gavr'inis, to examine some of these old monuments. I must tell you about it to-morrow.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE TUMULUS OF GAVR'INIS—THE SUDDEN FRIGHT—THE RETURN HOME.

The island of Gavr'inis is delightful. So nice and shady; there are plenty of trees. The very place for an encampment. We made our way at once to the tumulus, as uncle called the great mound we had seen from our boat. A tumulus, you know, mamma, is a pile of earth and stones raised over a grave. What learned words I use now, don't I? We had to pass between two walls of crumbling stone, Neptune leading the way. He had a big key in his hand, a candle, and some matches. He has often brought visitors here before.

We stopped at a little iron door, which closes the entrance to the grave. Bertha, who had been walking

very bravely on in front, gave a little cry of fear and got behind uncle. Neptune lit the candle, turned his big key in the stiff lock, the door opened with a creak and a groan, and we found ourselves opposite to a dark gloomy-looking passage which seemed full of cobwebs. I followed Neptune into a narrow gallery, the walls of which consisted of huge stones covered with queer marks. The candle gradually shed a dim light on the tortuous passage, which seemed to wind in and out without end.

We followed each other in silence. It was very solemn to be walking on in the dim light, without knowing what we were coming to; and, as uncle said in a hollow whisper, we had the weight of thousands of years above, if not upon our shoulders. I don't know how long the gallery was—miles, I should think; but at last it brought us out into a round room ("Rectangular you mean," says Gustav, looking over my shoulder) with eight huge columns for walls standing bolt upright and supporting an immense slab of stone. We stood and looked at each other for a minute, when we were all assembled in this strange place. The daylight streamed through an opening in the columns and lit up one side; the other was still dim and full of shadows. Bertha, who had clung close to uncle all through the dark passage, now peeped out from beneath his cape and was going to speak, when we suddenly heard a most awful noise like a clap of thunder,

followed by another and another in rapid succession. I was terrified, mamma—I caught hold of Neptune's hand, and made him drop his candle. The hot wax fell on my fingers and burned them, but I did not notice it then. Neptune put his arm round me as kindly as uncle might have done, and to my surprise shouted, "Peter, Peter, none of that, none of that!" Would you believe it, mamma, we heard some one, as I thought, behind us mocking him, and crying, "Peter, Peter, none of that!" It was terrible. I saw aunt move to the side of the cavern where there was some light, and Gustav—brave Gustav—was holding her hand. As for Bertha, she had disappeared entirely under uncle's cloak, and Peter was nowhere to be seen. Then I heard uncle's voice say, "It's only the echo, my dear child!" and a voice took up his words and cried, "Only the echo, my dear child!" Then Gustav laughed, and oh, mamma, you should have heard the echo of that laugh! Though I knew what it was then, I could not help shuddering—I can't describe it, it reminded me of a picture I saw in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' where Christian is stopping his ears and the evil spirits are whispering to him. You know I always used to dream of that picture after I had seen it.

It was a long time before we were all calm enough to listen to the explanation of the thunder. As soon

as Neptune could get free of my hands, he dragged Peter out of a corner and gave him such a shaking. It seems Peter has played the same trick before. He rolled a big stone on to the floor of the cavern, and that made the first echo. Neptune was very angry, and papa was vexed with himself for not having prepared us for the echo. When Bertha saw Peter in disgrace, she quite forgot her fright, and ran forward to plead for him. She always forgets all about herself when any one else is in trouble.

Presently uncle began telling us some wonderful things about the cavern. Peter, thoroughly ashamed of himself, listened too; and we had no more echoes. Uncle spoke in whispers. It was very solemn still; like a funeral, I should think. He made us look at the queer figures drawn on the stones, and showed us some funny-looking Druid knives. I wonder nobody ever stole them—don't you? But this cavern is kept locked. Neptune had to ask the mayor of the province the island is in for the key. Fancy, the Druids never used iron or steel: their sacred knives are made of granite or flint, or something of that kind. Those we saw were very small; but uncle said others have been found of immense size.

One stone in the wall was hollowed out in the middle; in the hollow part there were rings of stone. Uncle said archæologists had had many a fight about

the meaning of these rings and the use of the hollow, and we were all looking very grave over these great scientific questions, when Miss Bertha suddenly sat her doll Rose in the hollow, saying, naïvely, "That's the best thing we can use it for now!" This made us all laugh, and brought on the echo again, which startled Bertha and made her snatch up Rose.

Uncle would have told us a great deal more about the stones, but aunt and Bertha were anxious to get out into the open air again; and, truth to tell, I was not sorry when the retreat was sounded myself. Neptune lit his candle, and we filed out. My left hand is a little blistered. Bertha tied her pocket-handkerchief round it as soon as she noticed it. Peter came to say how sorry he was to have frightened us, and said Marianne didn't like it at first either. We told him not to mind, and Gustav proposed that we should climb to the top of the tumulus. We did—at least, all of us except aunt and uncle. Peter was most anxious to help Bertha, who still looked rather pale after her fright, and Father Neptune carried Rose, as her mistress could not bear to leave her behind. We had a splendid view from the top of the monument. Uncle shouted out to us from below, that Cæsar and his legions might have been seen from that very spot. So Gustav and I amused ourselves with fancying they were coming to take our mount, and wondering how we should defend it.

"Throw stones at them," suggested Bertha, valiantly flinging one as far as she could.

"Hide in the cavern," said Neptune, laughing in his big beard.

"Join their ranks, and fight for Brittany," said Peter.

We all laughed, of course, at the idea of joining the invader and fighting for your country at the same time.

They say a great battle was really fought somewhere about here between Cæsar and the old natives of Brittany, who, the great conqueror says in his Commentaries, "were the most powerful and fiercest inhabitants of these countries." Nobody knows for certain where this battle was fought. Uncle is most anxious to fix on the exact spot. When I am grown up I will try and find out, and if I succeed I shall let uncle know at once. He will most likely be very old by that time.

We had dinner under a clump of trees near the tumulus, and I can tell you our baskets and satchels were much lighter when we packed them to go back to the boat than when we disembarked.

We were very sorry to leave the island. Gustav, Bertha, and I thought we should like to settle on it. We thought we could hire a boat and a gun, bring over our fishing-rod, and support ourselves on the birds we could shoot, and the fish we could catch. We begged

uncle to let us stay a few hours and explore the rest of our future domain; but he said, "No, the wind is falling, and we shall be late getting home as it is." So we had to go back to the boat, and we started with such a fair wind that Neptune and Peter unfurled the sails and seated themselves in the bottom of the boat with their arms crossed.

We skirted along the coast of the pretty islands of Baden and Lannor. The sea shone so brightly in the sunbeams, that Bertha, who often says very pretty things, cried, "It is raining stars!" and really it looked very much like it, for the blue sea was studded with dancing sparkles. Bertha leant over the side of the boat and tried to catch some of the stars, but they melted away in her fingers.

Gustav talked about boats to Neptune all the way home. Neptune doesn't know much of the theory of navigation, but he is thoroughly well up in its practice. I asked what made the sails red, and Neptune told me the cloth is plunged in a concoction made from bark and ochre, which keeps them from rotting, and makes them look so bright when they are spread out in the sun.

Uncle was quite right. The wind fell suddenly, and it took us two hours to get to the pier we started from, which you know is a good walk from our home. When we reached home we found nurse, the little ones, Fido

and Griffin, assembled at the door to watch for us. They evidently thought we were lost, to judge by the fuss they made over us. I was very tired, but I was determined to write everything down before I forgot it.

I am writing to you to-day, mother, perched on an immense fragment of stone, as big as our house, I do believe. It was flung on to the beach near St. Pierre, but, when and how, nobody knows. It is covered with brown and grey moss, which makes a very comfortable seat. I think I am just on a level with our church bell, and I have the sea on both sides of me.

Nobody knows where this stone came from. A herdsman told me gravely, the other day, that a fairy had brought it here in his apron. If so, the fairy must have been unusually big, and the apron unusually strong—that's all I can say. Uncle says, he believes it—I mean the stone—must have been rolled here in the deluge. My own private opinion is, that it was part of another huge rock not far off; for there's one in sight that looks as if its edges would just fit into the hollows of this one. I only wish you could see the two, mother dear: I am quite sure you would agree with me. Bertha does.



PERCHED ON AN IMMENSE FRAGMENT OF STONE. Page



CHAPTER XIV.

INLAND — THE CRACKED BELL — THE DEAF AND DUMB CHILD — THE ROCKS AT CARNAC — A TRAGEDY.

To-day our guide wears his land costume, and Prince, —good little Prince—is going to draw us to Carnac. Bertha and Rose are going too. You know the Druid stones at Carnac are very celebrated; there's a very pretty church there too—look at the picture of it Gustav sends you.

Uncle and aunt seem quite glad to get away from the beach, and I am not altogether sorry to see the trees and grass again. Bertha and Rose of course think the same as I do, but Gustav and Neptune declare there's nothing like the sea, and that a view of the Atlantic is worth all the pretty land scenery in the world. That is only natural for them, as Neptune has

been on the water so much, and Gustav is going into the navy; but Bertha and I clapped our hands every time we came to a clump of trees, or drove across a heath covered with delicate pink flowers.

We made a halt at Prince's native village, but I can't say Prince himself took much interest in it. We put up at a snug little inn, and leaving the pony to have a rest, we went to look at the church. We boys climbed up into the tower, and Gustav must have alarmed the neighbourhood, for in swinging himself up to peep at the view through a slit in the wall, he caught hold of a rope which was somehow connected with a cracked old bell. The bell rang out one, two, three doleful strokes, and the unexpected clatter nearly took away my breath. We found a birds' nest, but it was deserted. This is a very bad time of year for birds' nests. When we came down we found uncle and aunt, and Bertha, trying to appease the old sexton who had been showing them over the church, and was very wrath at the ringing of the bell. Uncle was at first disposed to scold us; but when Gustav explained that it was entirely an accident, his father said no more, but slipped some small silver into the old man's hand. This mollified him wonderfully, and he offered to go up the tower again and show us a funny inscription on the old bell, but uncle said we must not wait.

We were quite ready for some lunch when we got

back to the inn. We peeped in at Prince in his stable as we passed the door. He was gravely blinking at an old pony of about his own size. Bertha said she thought they must have been telling each other of their adventures. "Perhaps they are connections or old friends," laughed Neptune; "they are certainly very much alike."

At luncheon we had great fun, as there was only three knives and forks in the establishment. We took it in turns to use them. After luncheon we started again, and made for Auray. You would have laughed to see Bertha bring out her doll, and point out all the places of interest to her as gravely as possible. We passed very near the battle-field on which Charles de Blois was killed. I remembered that his death put an end to the war of succession between him and Jean de Montfort.

We did not stop at Auray, but drove right through it, the dogs barking at us, and the children shouting and clapping their hands. Beyond the town we came to a wooded, undulating district, which was very pretty. Bertha kept asking Rose how she felt, if the change of air was doing her good, and so on. You know Rose is supposed to have a delicate chest, and Bertha has a little shawl which she always wraps round her when it is at all chilly.

We soon turned back towards the sea, rather to my

regret, as the country looked so fresh and pretty; but as we approached Carnac we all got very much excited at the fresh wonders which met us at every turn. You told me once, mamma, that you had been to stay with my English aunt at Tunbridge Wells, and that you never should forget the beautiful rocks there. Well, I don't believe they could have been so grand or so wonderful as those we have seen to-day. As we left the heaths, the meadows, the fields of yellow corn behind us, we came first to solitary rocks standing erect like sentinels to guard the approach to their stronghold. Beyond them were groups of rocks, and beyond them again other groups, stretching away to the sea. We drove into the town of Carnac to find some place to leave Prince, and when we had got rid of him, uncle proposed that we should go and see the church before we began to explore the rocks. Gustav and I were not very willing, but I am glad we went, for there is a better tower than the one we had seen in the morning. Uncle went up it with us, and we had such a magnificent view from the top. Fancy, mamma, we found an artist up there making a picture of the rocks with the sea behind them. Such a beauty! The artist let us look at his sketches, and he gave me one of the tower from below. I shall keep it always, and have it framed when I can afford to. The artist spoke funny French—he was an Italian, I think. He said he

had lost two hats from the tower: one had been blown into the sea, and the other on to a rock, "where it perhaps does duty as a sea-gulls' nest," laughed Gustav.

We took care not to ring the bells this time, though the ropes certainly looked tempting. When we went back to the church, the sexton was giving aunt a long history about a carved pebble he held in his hand. It seems this pebble is three thousand years old, and was once part of a collar found in a cave. Nobody knows who the collar belonged to. I did not care to hear much about it, and that's the truth. I shall never forget something I saw as we passed through the churchyard. A little girl, about as big as Bertha, was kneeling by a grave, resting her head against the stone, and sobbing most bitterly. Bertha caught sight of her, too, and wanted to run and comfort her, but the old sexton shook his head and said,—

"No use, miss—the little maid is deaf and dumb, so was her twin-brother; it's him she's grieving for—we buried him yesterday. They were never apart. They talked in some language of their own, I do believe."

We turned away, Bertha looking back again and again, her great blue eyes full of tears. Presently she whispered to me,—

"Walk slowly, Robert; I will catch you," and before I could ask where she was going, she had run back to

the churchyard and laid Rose—her cherished, darling Rose—on the grave near the child. I saw her give Rose a long, long kiss, and wrap her little pink shawl tenderly about her, and then, without looking back, she ran to me.

I took her hand, and we joined the others before we had been missed. Bertha's face was flushed, but the tears were gone.

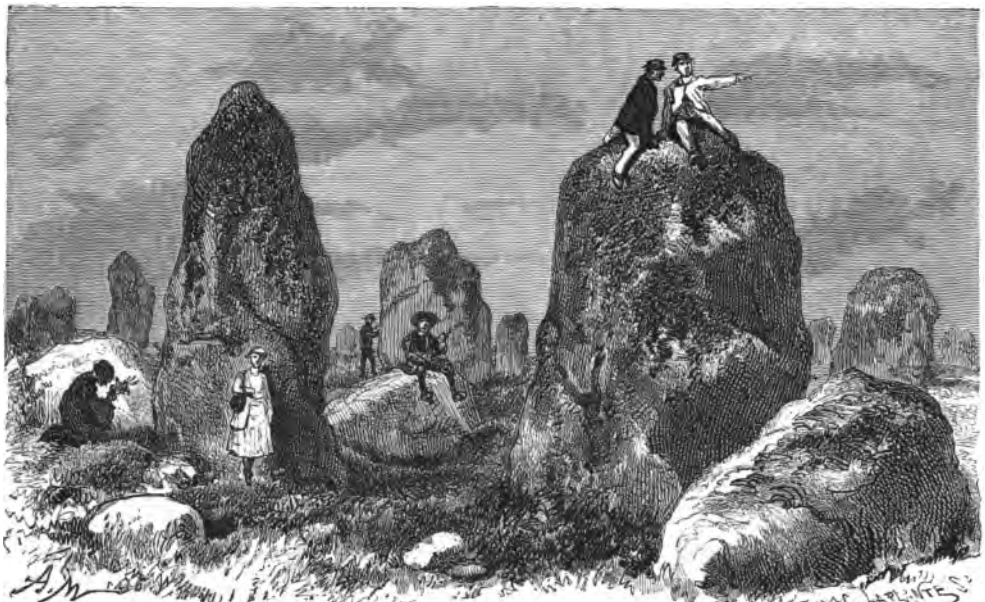
"What have you done with Rose?" I asked, just as we reached the first group of rocks.

"Left her for the little girl to find," she whispered. "Rose is deaf and dumb, too."

"But what will you do without her?"

It was stupid of me to ask that, mamma. It nearly made Bertha cry again; but she managed to say, "I have another doll—Ella her name is. I shall talk to her about Rose."

A ragged boy offered to guide us to the top of the highest rock, on which there is a little church, and uncle promised him sixpence if we all came down again safely. We did, and Bertha added a bun to the sixpence, at which the boy grinned in high delight. After that we were allowed to wander at will wherever we liked, and Gustav and I climbed on to a jagged rock, which was rather like a camel without any legs. We sat astride on the top, and tried to make out the names of all the places we could see.



GUSTAVE AND I CLIMBED ON TO A JAGGED ROCK. Page 132.

Bertha was very quiet all the afternoon; she stood leaning against a rock, looking out towards the sea with a very sad expression on her rosy little face. Was she thinking of the dead deaf and dumb boy, or of her own lost doll? Perhaps of both.

The sun was beginning to set when we started for home. As we were all very tired, Neptune brought our trap, drawn by Prince, close down to the rocks. Prince looked at the stone monsters about him with the utmost indifference, but made a sudden dash at the bunch of flowers aunt held in her hand. A look from Neptune checked him, and Bertha gave him a handful of grass, which he munched up as if he had had nothing to eat all day.

As we passed the churchyard Bertha looked wistfully in. The deaf and dumb child and the doll were both gone. The bells were ringing for evening service. The villagers shaded their eyes with their hands to look at us as we rolled by. It was so quiet and peaceful. I wish you had been with us, mother dear. Nobody noticed that Bertha had lost her doll, not even aunt. I couldn't help telling aunt about it when we came in. She smiled so sweetly, and said,—

"The dear child! I must buy her another doll. I don't think, though, that Bertha would love a new one as she did poor Rose."

I have a dreadful tragedy to tell you about now,

mamma. Griffin is dead! he has been killed. It was his own fault entirely. I have told you before how very badly he has behaved lately, and how angry he has made nurse. Well, just after we came in yesterday evening, Griffin, who had been watching his opportunity for a long time, sprang upon Ricoco, Neptune's parrot, who I told you about before. He was a little too late: ten minutes earlier he might have run off with his prey, and perhaps never have been detected as the thief. He was about to slink away with poor Ricoco in his mouth when a shout from Neptune made him drop his prize. The next moment a huge pebble, flung with unerring aim by Neptune, felled Griffin to the ground. He gave one groan, and lay there lifeless. Nurse, who had run out to entice Fido in to his basket for the night, saw the awful tragedy from a distance; she flung up her arms, and gave a most heartrending scream, which Neptune did not seem to hear. He had picked up Ricoco, and was looking at his pet with angry and sorrowful eyes.

I felt very indignant with Neptune: he need not have killed the poor creature outright. As for nurse, she says she will never forgive him. Griffin would very likely have become reformed on our return to Paris, she thinks. Now he is dead, and there is no chance for him to do better. Her old affection for him has returned: she has laid his dead body in the



DEATH OF GRIFFIN.

basket he travelled here in; to-morrow morning he is to be buried.

Ricoco is not dead, mamma! He was only stunned. He has a bad wound on his neck, and has lost some of his feathers. His neck is bound round with one of Bertha's best pocket-handkerchiefs; he sits on his perch and winks at us all as much as to say, "Ricoco is still alive, never you fear; a bird like I am doesn't go out of the world so quickly as all that." All we hear, though, is an occasional "Fie! fie!" which is one of the words Gustav has taught him.





CHAPTER XV.

WE FORGIVE NEPTUNE — THE STORM — THE SHIPWRECK — OUR FEARS.

I HAVE forgiven poor old Neptune, mamma. Fancy, he came into my room this morning with Ricoco perched on his hand.

"Master Robert," he began, "you are vexed with me: I behaved shamefully; the cat belonged to you. I can't think what possessed me to kill him, but when anything I love is injured, I am beside myself with rage. Poor Ricoco has been with me in all my travels, and many a time I have rescued him from the saucepan or the spit. You can imagine, then, how I felt when I thought he was dead. But I am very sorry now, and I have brought Ricoco to give him to you instead of your cat. I know he will be taken care

of: you have a kind heart; so here he is, if you choose to take him."

Never had I heard such a long speech from Neptune before, and when, at the end of it, he held the parrot out to me, the tears were standing in his eyes. I really did not at first know what to say. I thanked him and said I quite forgave him, but I could not think of taking his parrot. Then I held out my hand, and he shook it warmly in his great brown palm. I think he was very glad I did not take Ricoco.

We are not going on an expedition to-day, for Neptune has promised to go fishing with an old comrade. This comrade has no boat but a battered old egg-shell, as Neptune calls it, and no nets but rotten ones. We none of us liked Neptune to go out without us, and when we saw the vessel in which he was to embark, even we boys called out that it was not safe.

"Are you really going out in that cockle-shell?" asked uncle.

"Yes, sir," replied Neptune, "but it will be for the last time—the boat and its owner have both seen their best days."

"It's a good thing it's fine," I observed. "You would certainly sink in rough water."

"Well," said Neptune, looking up into the sky, "I hope we shall be home before the squall."

"Do you think there will be a squall?" Neptune nodded his head.

"Suppose you should be caught in it?" cried Bertha, taking Neptune's wrinkled hand in hers, and stroking it with her little soft fingers.

"If I thought I should, I would not go," said Neptune. "I don't wish to serve for supper to the crabs."

Fido, who seems to have quite got over his fears of the water, now jumped into the boat, Neptune and the old sailor followed him; they pushed off, and in spite of Fido's loud barking protest at my remaining behind, he was obliged to stay with the fishermen. Poor Fido! I wished afterwards I had made Neptune let him come back.

After they were gone, we climbed up a steep cliff, from which we could see a long distance over the water, and watched them till they were out of sight. As they passed beneath the cliff, Neptune waved his hat, and Fido gave us a bark of recognition. After that, we went down on the beach a little, but we did not stay out long. The wind rose suddenly, and the sky became black with heavy clouds.

"I hope grandfather will be in soon," said Peter, as he bid us good-night; "but I am not much afraid for him. He knows all about the weather, and every creek along the coast; he's sure to run in somewhere before the storm comes on."



PETER SEEMS TO HAVE HIS EYES FIXED ON SOMETHING.

Page 139.

Oh, mother! there is such a fearful hurricane raging. All the people of the village are assembled on the beach watching for the boats to come in. I wonder how they can stand—I'm sure I couldn't keep my feet. They say this is nothing to the storm we may expect presently.

All the boats have come in, mamma, except the one Neptune and the old sailor are in. We are dreadfully anxious about them. Such a storm has come on. I never heard such thunder, and the lightning is so vivid, I don't like to sit near the window; but I can't help running to look out every now and then. I can see Peter and Marianne from my window; they are quite close to the water. Marianne is actually kneeling on the wet sand, looking up into the sky with her hands clasped together. Peter seems to have his eyes fixed on something in the distance. I wonder if he sees a boat. I wonder where Gustav is!

I hear shouts under the balcony——

I ran to find out what the shouts meant, mamma, and saw a number of men and women talking to each other, and gesticulating as if something extraordinary had happened. Presently they all seemed to catch sight of Peter and Marianne at once, for they turned towards the beach where the poor children were watching, tumbling over each other in their haste. When they got close to them, though, their

hurry seemed over; they hesitated, talked in whispers, and pointed towards a low rock in the opposite direction. You can guess how eager I was to know what had happened. I had half a mind to go out. The rain had stopped for a few minutes, but it was still blowing great guns—besides, I was afraid to miss seeing what the people were going to do if I left the window. Presently a woman, a near neighbour of Neptune's, whose son was drowned last year, went up to Peter and touched his shoulder. How he started! She spoke to him. I longed to hear what she said. It must have been bad news, for he wrung his hands, and Marianne sunk back against a rock and hid her face.

Just then Gustav opened my door and called me, saying,—

"Come out, Robert; let us go down to the beach. It is not raining—some news has come of Neptune, I believe."

We went together, and Gustav whispered, as he put his arm in mine, "A strange terror has come over me, Robert; I don't know why," adding, with an attempt at a laugh, "perhaps some dreadful sea-monster has been cast on shore."

Mother, dear, it was no sea monster we saw—something far, far, worse than that! When we got on to the beach, Peter, Marianne, and the crowd of

men and women were all gone; but we could see them hurrying towards the low rock the woman had pointed to. We followed them—we heard Peter give a loud cry—we saw the crowd make way for him and Marianne, and then for a long time we could make out nothing else. Everybody gathered so closely round the rock that we could not see what they were looking at; but at last the same woman who had spoken to Peter said something about carrying *him* home. "Who? I wonder," whispered Gustav; but before I could answer several of the men moved away, and we saw the dead bodies of the old fisherman and poor Fido. I had seen a dead dog before, mamma, but never a man—I wish I had not seen him. I shall dream of him to-night, I know I shall. I did not think of Neptune at first; I longed to get away —my hand shakes now when I write about it. I looked at Gustav. He was very pale too. He said, in a hoarse voice, "Let us go, Robert; let us tell papa; perhaps he is not quite dead." The old fisherman he meant, of course.

We came home, and nurse and uncle went off at once to see what could be done. The poor fisherman was quite dead. So was Fido—poor Fido. I cried—I don't mind owning, mamma, that I cried over his death. You know I always loved him better than Griffin. I wonder—I wonder, mamma, if Fido is gone to my

little sister now. I shouldn't like to say that to any one but you, mamma; but she would like to have him again, wouldn't she? Nurse brought the poor dog's body home in her arms—he is to be buried to-morrow beside Griffin.

When I went to bed, Peter and Marianne were still running about on the beach, evidently possessed with a terrible dread that their dear old grandfather might be lying somewhere needing their help. I could not sleep for a long time, and in the middle of the night I woke with a start. I thought I heard Neptune's voice, but I am afraid I must have been dreaming.





CHAPTER XVI.

SAVED — THE LIGHTHOUSE — THE UNWELCOME GUEST.

I WAS not dreaming last night, mamma. Neptune really is alive. I slept till quite late this morning, and when I looked out of my window the first thing I saw was the dear old sailor sitting at his door mending a net as if nothing had happened.

Of course I dressed as quickly as I could, and ran down to hear all about his adventures. It seems it was the old fisherman's own fault that he and Fido were drowned. Neptune had persuaded him to run into shelter when the squall first came on, but in the first lull he insisted on starting for home, saying they would have time to get into port before the storm broke. Neptune foolishly, as he himself admits, yielded to his comrade's persuasions; the wind rose

again, the boat was swamped by a heavy sea, and the three companions were thrown into the water. Neptune says he lost sight of the others almost directly, and that he himself swam till his strength was exhausted. Fortunately, however, he managed to reach a rock just above the level of the waves. He clung to it until he was picked up by a passing steamer and taken to a neighbouring port, from which he walked quietly home.

I asked him what he thought about when he felt he must be drowned, and he replied:

"Much the same as I did when I was nearly drowned in the Gulf of Mexico. It's no new thing, little master, for an old man like I am to face death. I commended my soul to God, and asked him to take care of the children—that's about all."

There are great rejoicings at the cottage of course; even Ricoco nods his head with satisfaction at seeing his master back. The villagers, too, have all come crowding round the door to congratulate Neptune on his escape. The old fisherman does not seem to have had anybody belonging to him—he is already buried, they say.

We have such grand plans, mamma, for the last three weeks of our holidays. Neptune is going to teach us boys to manage a boat ourselves. Uncle is having an old lugger done up for us by the carpenter.



HE MANAGED TO REACH A ROCK. Page 144.

Besides this, we mean to build a lighthouse on a dangerous sand-bank. We may use the bricks of an old shed in uncle's garden which is to be pulled down. If we can hit upon some way of lighting our lighthouse we shall be doing a good service to the place; perhaps even we may be the means of saving the lives of a crew and passengers of some steamer—who knows?

Gustav spends hours in the library hauling over big dusty volumes in the hope of finding some cheap way of illuminating our building when it is done. Of course gas is out of the question—much too expensive,—and a lamp would be nearly as bad. Bertha has offered us a dozen wax candles which were given to her to light up a little model church she is very fond of. We accepted them rather than disappoint her, but they would not even give us light enough to work by on a misty evening. Meanwhile we go on building, hoping that some happy thought may strike us. I am the chief engineer, and I am often sorely puzzled how to go on. At first I had an idea of building my lighthouse just like the Eddystone one you showed me a picture of, but my bricks will fall out when I try to make them taper upwards. Uncle advises me to be content with a square pile with a lantern at the top—we shall see.

You would like to see how tall I am getting. I

have grown two inches at least, and I am as brown as a berry. Aunt says it does her heart good to see how Gustav and I enjoy our meals. You must not expect me to write much in the next few days. I shall be on the water, or at work at the lighthouse for hours together.

Oh, mamma! a terrible sword is hanging over our heads! I was stupid enough to say how happy we are here in the letter I wrote to Louis for his birthday, and now he writes that he has asked his mother to bring him here. Aunt Louisa, who, you know, humours him in everything, has written to Aunt Mary, asking her if she can let her have two rooms in this house, or will find her lodgings close by. I dare not tell Aunt Mary how much I dislike Louis, or ask her not to let him come; but I have confided my dread of him to Bertha, who says she is afraid there is nothing to be done. I know how it will be, we shan't have a moment's peace. We shall never finish our lighthouse —we shan't be able to go out in the lugger with Neptune. It would make our dainty town-bred cousin sea-sick. Don't be vexed with me, mamma, for writing like this: you know what Louis is, and that I have good reason to dislike him.

Aunt Louisa, Louis, and Margaret have arrived, mamma, and have already made themselves quite at

home. Bertha is gone to sleep in nurse's room, that Louis may have hers, and aunt and Margaret have the best spare bedroom. I never saw Margaret before; she was at school, you know, when Aunt Louisa was staying in Paris. She is a nice-looking girl, about twelve years old, very quiet and reserved, as different from Louis as possible. Gustav says she is pretty, but I think her nose is too long. She is not half as pretty as Bertha—that's very certain.

Aunt is delighted with everything, even with the little pigs which poke their noses in at the door. Louis whispered to me, "This ecstasy will last twenty-four hours!"

Louis isn't a bit altered. He is as disrespectful as ever to his mother, and as overbearing as ever with me. He treats Margaret shamefully; I can't think how she bears it, but, she is so patient, we all like her. She and Bertha are inseparable already; so are Gustav and Louis. I wonder at Gustav, but he will soon find Louis out—that's one comfort. I see the two walking up and down the beach, arm-in-arm, now; I expect Louis is telling Gustav some wonderful tale of which he is the hero.

Gustav came in first after I had written that, mamma, and flung himself on to a chair, exclaiming,—

"What an insufferable prig the boy is! I am tired of him at the end of the first day, and I have promised

the mother to do the polite to him for the first week at least. After that, I mean to leave him to himself."

I couldn't help telling Gustav I had been surprised at his going off with Louis and giving up all our plans. He laughed goodhumouredly, and said,—

"Well, Robert, I did try telling Louis about the lighthouse, but it was no good; he puffed at his little cigarette, and said 'Child's play!' in a most contemptuous manner. We had better wait a few days before we try to go on with it."

I hate waiting, as you know, mamma; but I suppose there is no help for it.

We spent the afternoon sauntering about the cliffs, Louis smoking whenever we were out of sight of the house. In the evening we played cribbage and piquet with aunt and Louis. Louis is very fond of cards; he wants us to stake our coppers, but Gustav will not hear of that.

Imagine how we felt when we heard Aunt Louisa telling Aunt Mary that Louis is such a dear, good boy. "He has quite given up smoking, much as he likes it, just to please his old mother."

Margaret, Gustav, and I, all coloured up to our eyes, but nobody happened to notice us.



CHAPTER XVII.

LOUIS' WHIMS — THE DUCK-HUNT — THE SEA-URCHIN.

I CAN'T say it is very amusing at St. Pierre, now, mamma. What with Aunt Louisa's whims and Louis' caprices, we are never comfortable for five minutes together. We are never able to carry out any plan but what one or the other of them interferes. We were to have spent the whole of this morning on the beach. We meant to have a good swim to begin with, and then go to work at the lighthouse. Everything was ready. Neptune had lent us Prince to carry down our materials and our lunch; we had just tied on our last package when aunt suddenly perceived a black cloud in the sky, and Louis had a bad foot. Directly a scheme fails to amuse him he has a corn,

and can't walk. He is the most provoking boy; it's no use to tell me to be patient with him, mamma—I can't indeed. To-day we hesitated before yielding; we none of us thought it would rain, but then he and his mother put on a most aggrieved air, and aunt said, "Pray, go; pray, do not let us put you out;" so that there really was nothing for it but to stay at home. To wind up, aunt observed, with a sweet smile,—

"After all, my dears, it's entirely on your own account. I vote for putting off the expedition; you would certainly have got wet through."

"That's just what they expected when they made up their minds to bathe," said Louis, insolently, looking at me triumphantly.

I came up here, mamma, lest I should fly out at him, and I feel better now I have told you about it. He's gone for a walk by himself, so his corn can't be very bad. I wonder aunt and uncle take no notice of our troubles. All our holidays are spoilt. Louis' last freak is calling Gustav and me Orestes and Pylades.

You need not make yourself uneasy about my smoking too much, mamma. I did try it—Louis persuaded me; but it made me feel so sick, nothing will induce me to touch his horrid tobacco again. He has quite a stock of cigars and cigarettes, besides a beautiful ebony pipe. It annoys me dreadfully to see him

smoking, reading his papers, and stroking the half-dozen yellow hairs he calls his moustache. He could do all that just as well at home.

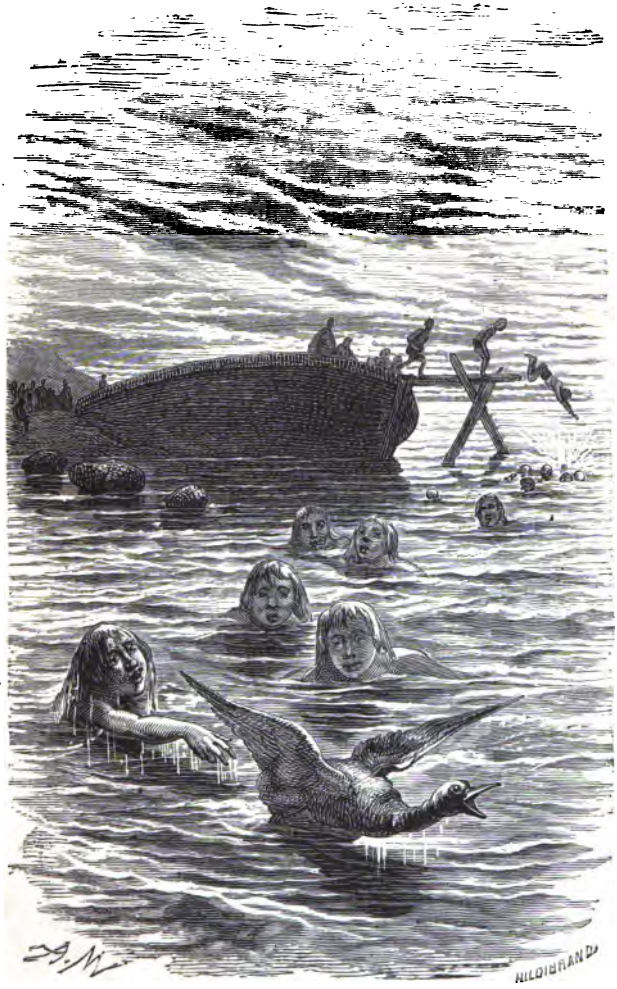
But you will be as tired of hearing about Louis as we are of seeing him. I daresay you will wonder why we say so much about him, if we dislike him so; but it's some comfort to grumble to you, mother dear.

I am not going to say a word about Louis to-day, mamma; I have something much more exciting to tell you. There has been such a grand set-out here. First a regatta, and then a duck-hunt. The regatta was beautiful. We saw numbers of fine vessels, with all their colours flying, sail past, and the cliffs were crowded with people in their holiday dresses. But the regatta was nothing to the duck-hunt. Have you ever seen one, mamma? I don't suppose you have. There was an old boat moored close to the beach, with a plank sticking out beyond it. The boat was full of half-naked boys. A gun was fired as a signal, and a duck was let fly from the boat. The next instant the boys were crowding upon each other on the plank, and plunging headforemost into the water one after the other. The poor duck floundered along, quacking most wofully, the boys close upon it. It got out a long distance from the beach before it was caught; but at last a sturdy young fellow clutched it, tucked it under one arm, and swam back to the boat in

triumph. The prize was the duck itself and a gold piece. The winner came up after the successful boatmen had carried off their rewards; and, as he pulled his wet forelock out of respect to the mayor, who gave away the prizes, I recognised Peter. I am so glad he won, mamma. I wondered what he would do with the duck, and asked Marianne, who was standing near me in the crowd. "Oh, we shall fatten it up for our Christmas dinner!" she said; "perhaps Peter will win another before then. If he does, we shall sell it."

After the races, fireworks were let off, and presently Bertha cried, "Oh, look! look! there is a ship on fire!" The people heard her, and every one shouted "Where? where?" "There!" said Bertha, pointing to the boats in the distance. It certainly looked like a fire, but it was only the moon rising and the reflection of the fireworks in the sky. The moon made everything look so lovely! I should like to be a poet, and write verses about what we saw to-night; but it is no use wishing. Sometimes I think there is nothing I can be. Louis teased Bertha very much about her mistake, but I do believe he thought it was a fire himself at first. I forgot—I did not mean to say anything about Louis to-day; but if he *will* interfere in everything, what can I do?

I have just added a sea-urchin to my collection of curiosities, mamma. When I saw it under the water,



THE DUCK HUNT. Page 152.

I shouted "A chestnut! a chestnut in the sea! where can it come from?" and Bertha and I looked everywhere for the tree from which it had fallen. Uncle happened to join us whilst we were wondering about it, and he told us the beautiful "chestnut" I held in my hand was a sea-egg, or sea-urchin, and that it belongs to the same family as my star-fish. I was very much surprised to hear that, but uncle turned the shell over, and I saw that it was the inside of a creature, with a mouth in the middle of its body, like a star-fish has. Such a great mouth, mamma, with long hard teeth sticking out. The outside of the shell is all over spikes, which uncle calls spines; they are so pretty, rather like the quills of a porcupine. Gustav said he had never seen such a perfect specimen before, as the spines are generally all broken when the sea-urchins are washed on to the beach. I had to put mine in fresh water to kill the animal living in it; it seemed rather cruel, but it died directly. I think Bertha would like to have it for a hat for her doll; but I must keep it for you, mamma.





CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE SEA-WEED — THE WHALE — THE PLOT — ITS SUCCESS — STAR-FISHES AND BARNACLES — THE SEA-HORSE.

I AM getting quite expert at drying sea-weed properly now, mamma, and I have such a grand collection for you. I have got a small specimen of even the commonest kinds, for they will seem uncommon in Paris. I have a piece of bladder-wrack, which is covered with little air-vessels, that pop like a pistol when you pinch them. I don't mean to pop these, though I long to each time I see them. This is not the wrack they use for manure and food for the cattle, mamma. I have got a bit of that too; it is very like the other, but it has no air-vessels. I think I have seen some of the

useful wrack in the fish-market at Paris; they pack lobsters in it. I have some oar-weed, too, which is rather like a hart's-tongue fern, with all the fronds growing on one stem. I was so proud, because I thought I had got a root of it, and might perhaps grow it in a tub of salt-water at home, but uncle says the root is only of use to sea-plants to help them to cling to the rocks. They don't suck up their food through their roots, like land plants. Besides these big sea-weeds, I have ever so many delicate little ones, which I have dried on separate pieces of paper, and hope to have bound together when I get my next pocket-money. I can get the most delicate kinds straight on the paper now. I feel ashamed of the crooked piece I sent you before.

Louis has been out walking with us to-day. He really was pretty amiable, until he unfortunately caught his foot in some thistles, and fell full length on the ground. Gustav laughed, and said if he did not use his eye-glass he would be able to see better. Louis is very fond of sticking an eye-glass into one eye. He was very angry with Gustav for laughing, and went off to tell his mother of the accident. Aunt Louisa spent ever so long picking the prickles out of her dear boy's coat and trousers. They say at home that you spoil me, mamma, but I am sure you never make such an absurd fuss over me as Aunt Louisa does

over Louis. If we are on the beach, and go out of sight of the house, she runs down, crying "Louis! Louis! where is Louis?" and he often hides behind the rocks on purpose to tease her.

To-day I saw a whale for the first time; it was in sight a long time. I could not imagine what it was. I saw a great black mass rolling about in the sea, and then a fountain began to play. That was only the whale spurting up the water. Gustav says whales are obliged to come up to the air to breathe now and then; so are porpoises. They are not like most fishes, which can breathe under water.

I am afraid you will think us rather spiteful, but, the fact is, we have determined to play Louis a trick to-night. He does deserve it: he has been worrying poor patient Margaret nearly to death. She is not at all a nervous girl, much braver than Louis is himself, in fact; but she has a horror of crabs. Well, to-day Louis deigned to catch a few, for his own private eating, we thought at first; no such thing, they were to tease Margaret with. She was sitting quietly beside Bertha on the beach, when her brother finished his fishing, put his crabs in his basket, and came and stood behind her. She looked up at him timidly, and asked him if he had had good sport.

"I'm going to have some better," he answered, with a meaning smile, and, taking one of the crabs out of

his basket, he quietly put it on her shoulder. The frightened creature at once clutched at Margaret's long hair. The poor girl screamed and started to her feet, crying "What is it—what is it, Louis? take it away, do take it away!"

Louis's only reply was to bring out a second crab, at which Margaret shrieked, and ran off as fast as her legs would carry her. Louis followed her, throwing the crabs at her. Gustav and I both cried "Shame!" and ran after the bully. He had such a long start of us, that he and Margaret had both disappeared behind a rock before we came up with them. Poor Margaret was cowering down, hiding her face in her hands, and sobbing with fright. Louis was just going to empty his basket of crabs into her lap. She had torn the one in her hair away; it lay dying on the sand, with a shining brown curl in its claws. We rushed upon Louis; we snatched away his basket; we rolled him on the sand; we were beside ourselves with rage.

"A ducking! a ducking!" cried Gustav. "Give his lordship a ducking, fine clothes and all!"

Louis scrambled to his feet, aimed a blow at Gustav, missed him, and set off running towards home, his face white with fear. Bullies are always cowards; why couldn't he stand and fight? we are both younger than he is. But he did not escape us, mamma: we caught him up; we both flung ourselves upon him; we got

him down on the sand, Gustav seized his head, holding down his arms; I tried to catch hold of his legs, but he kicked savagely, and a blow I got from the heel of his boot made me reel for a minute. I shall have a black eye to-morrow I'm afraid. We should have ducked him, mamma, in spite of all his resistance; we should have got him to a pool, if Margaret had not come up and begged and entreated us to spare him, to forgive him for her sake; when it was for her sake we were so angry with him. To my surprise, Gustav yielded to her, and let him get up. He walked off shaking his fist at us, and muttering vows of vengeance. When he was gone, Margaret tried to persuade us not to punish Louis any more, but all Gustav would promise was not to hurt him. As soon as we could get rid of Margaret, we went back to our fishing, and thought of all manner of different schemes for paying Louis out. Fortunately we caught an eel, and as Gustav slipped it into his fish-basket, he said,—

"I've got a plan now—not a word of our capture to any one—we'll keep this eel in water till bed-time, and then we'll put it in a basket, without fastening down the lid, and leave it in Louis' room. It is sure to get out and frighten him to death, for he is a regular coward."

So it was settled, and we went into dinner in capital spirits. Poor Margaret looked very pale, and could

hardly eat anything, but Aunt Louisa took no notice of her. All her sympathy was for Louis, who had evidently gone to her with some wonderful cock-and-bull story, for she kept making remarks about finding the life here anxious and harassing. We knew all this was meant for us, and I suppose Aunt Louisa hoped uncle would question us, but he only said,—

"I am afraid you have hurt your face, Robert; have some more pudding." And as I passed up my plate I saw such a merry twinkle in his eyes. I hope sometimes that uncle will see some way of getting rid of Louis; but I must make haste and tell you how things ended last night.

We kept our eel carefully hidden in my room until just before bed-time, and then, as agreed on, we put him in a fish-basket in Louis' room. Our only fear was that the eel might go to sleep, or refrain from making any journey of discovery.

We lay awake a long time listening and waiting. Everything remained quiet. Uncle, Aunt Mary, and Aunt Louisa were all gone to bed. We heard the big clock in the hall strike twelve. We began to be afraid nothing would happen; but presently, just as I was falling asleep, there came a yell of terror from Louis' room, followed by scream after scream. I jumped out of bed and ran into the passage. Louis was at his door, his hair standing on end, his eyes wild with

fright. I could see the lamp burning on a little table by his bed, and an open book lying on the floor.

"A serpent!" cried Louis, directly he saw me—"a terrible serpent! Let me come in your room."

At the word serpent I burst out laughing, and was going to run back to bed, but my retreat was cut off by the arrival of uncle, Aunt Mary, Aunt Louisa, Margaret, and three or four servants, in various fantastic costumes, all eager to know what the noise was about.

"What is it? What has happened to my darling boy?" cried Aunt Louisa, flinging her arms round Louis' neck.

"A serpent, mamma—a serpent in my room!" said Louis, still trembling, but beginning to be a little reassured by the presence of numbers—"a poisonous one, most likely."

"Has it bitten you? Are you hurt?" screamed Aunt Louisa. "Robert, Gustav, somebody, run for a doctor, a surgeon!"—but at this point, uncle, who had quietly made his way into Louis' room, came out holding the eel in his hand. At the sight of it the coward and his mother both ran to the other end of the passage.

"Why, it is only an eel!" said Aunt Mary. "What is there to be afraid of in that?"

"Nothing whatever!" said uncle, laughing heartily;

"but I am rather puzzled to know where it came from. Where is Gustav?"

At this question I got behind Aunt Mary.

"Gustav has evidently slept through the whole tumult," replied aunt.

"Isn't that a fish-basket in the corner?" observed Margaret.

"So it is," said uncle. "I understand the whole affair now. It is Gustav's basket; he probably left it here by mistake."

Aunt Louisa gave me a look of angry disdain and muttered,—

"It's much more likely to have been put there on purpose."

"Louis," said uncle, taking no notice of Aunt Margaret's insinuation, "you can go back to your room now I have rid it of the terrible serpent!"

As he spoke he bent down and picked up the book Louis had been reading. Mamma, I should not like uncle ever to look at me as he did at my cousin then, but he only said,—

"If you had not been foolish enough to read in bed, you would have been asleep by this time, and not have alarmed the whole household."

"Louis finds he can study better at night!" interposed Aunt Louisa—"what were you reading, my dear boy."

"Quinte Curce," answered Louis, under his breath, thinking uncle would not hear. Uncle's ears are very sharp though, and he gave Louis another look of withering contempt. I wondered he did not then and there accuse him of the lie he had told, but I expect he refrained for Aunt Louisa's sake.

After this everybody went back to bed, and as soon as all was quiet I crept softly to Gustav's room and opened the door. Gustav was awake; in fact, he had heard the noise, but had thought it more prudent not to show himself. I told him everything, and left him stifling his laughter beneath the bed-clothes.

This morning uncle asked us privately what we knew about the eel, and we told him the whole truth. He was not very angry, but said he thought we should be wiser to leave Louis alone; and added that if we had been spoilt as he has, we should probably be just as disagreeable.

I found a live star-fish to-day, mamma! I hope it will live till I come home. It is in a basin of salt water on my table. It looks quiet different from the dried one I told you about before. It's wonderful to see how it moves. Gustav helped me to pile up little heaps of pebbles in the water and then told me to watch until the star-fish took a constitutional. I did not have to wait long. Presently it began slowly stretching out its rays, which closed over the pebbles,

drawing the body slowly after them. We turned it over on its back and then we saw lots of tiny feet kicking out in such a ridiculous manner. Uncle lent me a magnifying glass, and then I saw that these feet are really little tubes which can be drawn right into the creature's body. My star-fish has a very small mouth in the middle of its body; but I think I told you that before.

I went to look at my star-fish just before I went to bed last night, and only think how astonished I was to see one of its rays floating about by itself. I was in such a fright: I thought it would die, and I ran down to uncle with my basin in my hands to ask him to explain why this had happened. He said it was a very common occurrence. It seems that when starfishes are imprisoned or in any trouble they throw off one of their arms, and people often find specimens on the beach with only four arms instead of five. Uncle says I must call them rays, not arms.

To-day Neptune has been hard at work repairing his old boat *Brilliant*. He had it turned upside down on some planks on the beach before any of us were down this morning. The bottom was covered with barnacles. I had never seen any before, but I had heard some boys at school say they turn into birds. I asked Neptune if that was true, and you should have heard him laugh, mamma,—I thought he would never stop.

He says that was only the fancy of some sailors hundreds of years ago. I carried off some barnacles for my aquarium. Their shells are very pretty, divided into five parts, and the barnacles push their feelers up between the parts to fish for food. Uncle's aquarium is nearly full already. It is such a beauty; but we never seem to have time to look at anything through the microscope after all. We have only one fortnight more here, and it seems a pity to spend any time indoors. Uncle says I shall come and stay with Gustav at Orleans some winter, and then we shall do some home work together. I wish you would go and live at Orleans, or persuade uncle to come and live at Paris. I don't know whatever I shall do without Gustav.

I have just brought home a sea-horse, mother. Such a queer little creature, no longer than my finger, with a head and shoulders like a horse and a tail like a scorpion. It has a funny little mane too. Look at the picture of it Gustav sends you. Haven't I kept my journal regularly? I have written six or seven pages to-day.





CHAPTER XIX.

THE VISIT TO L'ORIENT — THE MAN-OF-WAR — THE ARSENAL — LOUIS AGAIN — DELIVERANCE.

AUNT LOUISA and Louis are getting very tired of the quiet life here, and proposed this morning that we should spend the day at L'Orient, where there is a good deal of fine shipping to be seen.

Uncle consented readily, and it was arranged that we should all go—even Bertha and Margaret, who have been left very much to themselves lately. I don't mean the little ones, when I say *all*, of course—they stayed with nurse, and I believe she let them do all manner of things which are generally forbidden.

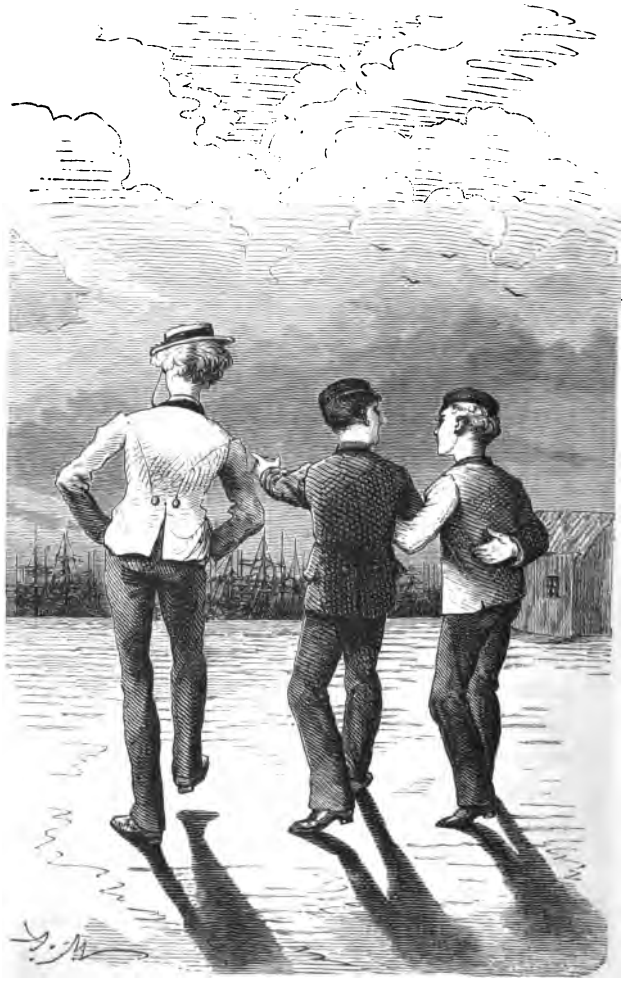
Now I must tell you all about our expedition. Everything went well until we got to L'Orient. Louis was unusually quiet, and was actually civil to his

mother. I expect he has not forgotten the look uncle gave him the other night. As soon as we got to L'Orient, however, our cousin's manner changed, and drawing Gustav and me aside, he tried to persuade us to go off with him and leave the elders and girls to creep about by themselves; adding, "You don't mean to be tied to the women's apron-strings all day, do you? If we don't make ourselves scarce, we shall be taken off to pay calls."

We were a little startled at this proposition; but, to own the truth, we rather liked the idea of being independent, and Louis went back to tell uncle we were going on; saying he knew the place well, and would take us to see everything comfortably.

"But *we* want to see everything too," said uncle; "why should we separate?" At that I saw Louis make a sign to his mother, who interposed, saying she always let Louis have plenty of freedom, and that he was quite accustomed to taking care of himself. Aunt Mary observed that *her* children generally preferred remaining with her, but that Gustav could do as he liked, and uncle, who was smiling in his beard, closed the discussion by telling Louis he could have his own way; but before we started, he laid his hand kindly on Gustav's shoulder and whispered a few words to him.

"All right, father," said Gustav aloud, "you may trust us for that."



OFF WE ALL THREE SET, WALKING ABREAST. Page 167.

"I *do* trust you," said uncle; and off we all three set, walking abreast. We agreed admirably till we came in sight of the ships, but then, when Gustav—who is mad on the subject of the navy—began pointing out the large vessels to me and telling me the names of different parts of the rigging, Louis burst in rudely with the words:

"Come, shut up with all that now. We are not come out to be preached at, but to have some fun."

Gustav checked the angry reply which was on his lips, and pressed my arm when I was going to speak. I think he must have promised his father to avoid a quarrel with Louis.

We went over several of the large ships and enjoyed it very much. Louis really was a capital guide, and knew a good many officers to speak to. There was one man-of-war just going to sea, and a friend of Louis' offered to take us to look at it. It was lying some distance out, and Gustav and I were half afraid to consent at first, as we did not know how long it would take us. The officer assured us we should be back in an hour; and only fancy, mother, he had one of the boats of his own ship let down and manned at once! We had twelve rowers, and we skimmed across the water like a sea-gull. Going over the ship was most delightful. I have never been on a large man-of-war before. All the officers were in their

uniforms, and there was a great deal of excitement on board. Gustav's eyes shone, and he drew himself up proudly as he stood on deck. I knew what he was thinking: it was, "*I* too shall be a naval officer some day!" I almost wished I could be, too, but I had changed my mind before I returned to land, as we had just a glimse of the sad side of this grand profession. Our friend asked us if we would mind going down into the midshipman's quarter to see a poor young middy who had been dreadfully hurt by the accidental bursting of a gun. We went, mamma; and there, in a very small, poky berth, lay a poor boy about my own age, with his head bandaged up and one arm resting on a pillow.

"I have brought some visitors to see you, Robert," said the officer kindly; and Gustav sat down on a little three-legged stool by the berth, whilst Louis stood at the door and looked in. I think I should have gone back if the boy's name had not been Robert, but that drew me to him. He smiled so sweetly and thanked us for coming, and then, looking wistfully up in the officer's face, he said,—

"Have you asked the captain, sir?" "Not yet, my boy, not yet," said the officer, and I think his voice trembled.

When we went on deck again I couldn't help asking the officer what it was the boy wanted of the captain.

"To go to sea with us to-night, instead of being taken to the hospital. It was to have been his first long voyage, and he is wild to go even now. We hadn't the heart to send him on shore before, but he must go in a few hours now."

"How long will it be before he is better?" inquired Gustav.

"I doubt if he will live," said the officer; "his spine is injured, and he will be a cripple for life, if he should recover."

A cripple for life—how terrible! and just after passing the examinations and taking the first step in his profession. Gustav and I shuddered, and even Louis looked sobered. I should *not* like to be in the navy. Gustav says a gun is just as likely to burst on land as at sea; perhaps so, but I expect it is easier to get out of the way of the splinters on land than on a ship.

We were very quiet as we were rowed back to the merchant vessel to which our friend, the officer, belonged. He pressed us to go on board and have some lunch with him, but as we would not consent, he ordered his men to row us to a pier a little distance off, and we landed at about twelve o'clock. We had still two hours to spare before we were to meet the rest of the party at the hotel in the town, and Gustav proposed that we should go over the arsenal.

"I shall do no such thing," cried Louis. "I mean to have a game of billiards. I can show you a place where we can have a jolly game, and get something to drink too."

Gustav was positively horrified, so was I, though I don't quite know why playing billiards is considered so very wicked. I only know people always look shocked when there is any talk about young fellows playing at them.

I said to Gustav, "I shall come with you to the arsenal," and linked my arm in his.

"Cowards, cowards!" cried Louis, turning on his heel. "You're afraid mamma and aunt will hear of it!"

The colour rushed into Gustav's face, and he half raised his hand to strike Louis. Something checked him, however, for he dropped it quietly and said,—

"Come, old fellow, don't let's quarrel to-day. Robert and I are very much obliged to you for taking us over the ships. Don't desert us now before we have seen the arsenal!"

I wonder Louis could resist Gustav, when he spoke like that. I know I couldn't have done what he did, for he just shrugged his shoulders and walked off; shouting, "Cowards!" when he was well out of Gustav's reach. We don't know what became of him after that. Gustav and I went over the arsenal alone, and enjoyed

it immensely. The man who showed us everything was so kind. He let us each fire a pistol in the court-yard, and hold the rifles ourselves. He showed us how to load and unload, told us anecdotes about his own adventures in the great war, and ended by giving us each a little medal in remembrance of our visit. He was one of the prisoners who went into Germany, mamma; he had to leave his wife and his little baby boy behind him, in a village near L'Orient, and he said his wife did not know whether he was alive or dead till he came back, when the prisoners were exchanged. We saw his wife, as we were going out, leading a rosy-cheeked little fellow by the hand. She courtesied to us, and the soldier, who is quite a young man, touched his cap in military style. I almost hope there will not be another war when I *am* a soldier, mamma—fancy how you would feel if I were marched off into Germany, or killed, and you never knew it!

When we reached the hotel, appointed as a rendezvous, we found uncle, the two aunts, and the girls waiting for us outside, but Louis had not appeared.

"Where is Louis?" cried everybody at once.

"I don't know," replied Gustav. "He parted from us just as we were going to the arsenal."

At this moment Louis fortunately joined us, or we might have been asked some embarrassing questions;

as it was, Aunt Margaret looked at us with anything but a pleasant expression.

"Why did you leave the others, my dear boy?" she cried, as Louis threw himself on to a bench, as if exhausted with fatigue.

"Our tastes differ," he replied, with unblushing effrontery—"they went to see the arsenal, I to look at the statue of Bisson."

How could he tell such a lie! Gustav and I both felt sure he had spent the whole afternoon at the billiard table; but Aunt Louisa believed him at once, and began praising his enthusiasm for Bisson to uncle. You know, Bisson was a young naval officer, who defended his ship from the ferocious attack of a hundred and forty Greek pirates, with only fifteen men to aid him, and when his vessel was boarded, set fire to the powder and perished with his enemies. There is a fine bronze statue in honour of him in L'Orient, but I didn't for one moment believe that Louis had been to look at it.

We dined at the hotel, and all, except Louis, were very hungry. He complained of headache, and his mother ordered up various dainties to try and tempt his appetite. I saw uncle exchange a meaning look with Aunt Mary, and I believe they suspected, as Gustav and I did, that Louis had been regaling himself in some shop before returning to us.

After dinner there was a discussion as to what we should do next. Aunt Louisa and Louis wanted to go to the theatre, and of course Gustav and I were eager to join them. Uncle, however, would not hear of it for us. He said, of course aunt must do as she liked, but that *his* boys could return to St. Pierre with him. It ended in Louis and his mother remaining at L'Orient, whilst the rest of us, including Margaret, returned home.

Louis and Aunt Louisa did not come back till twelve o'clock this morning, and Gustav and I gladly availed ourselves of his absence to get on with our lighthouse. I forgot to tell you, though, that uncle called us into his room last night, and asked for an account of where we had been, whilst we were separated from him the day before. We told him the exact truth, adding our suspicions about Louis. He looked very grave, and, after thinking for a few minutes, he said—"Well, I must find some way of preventing your amiable cousin from spoiling the rest of your holidays. Will you trust me?" Of course we said we would, and as we walked down to the beach, we wondered what he would do to help us. We worked hard all the morning at our lighthouse, and have nearly finished it. We delight in climbing to the top, when the tide is coming in, and seeing the waves beat against our foundations. We are still sorely puzzled about two things—how to

cover in the lighthouse, and how to light it. If you see Uncle George, ask him to tell us how to manage. He is an architect, so he is sure to know; tell him there is just room for two of us to sit on the top; that will give him an idea of the size. We sit opposite each other, you know, with our legs dangling down inside the walls, and our knees touch, so there would not be room for anyone else on the other two walls. A large plank would almost do, but the light ought to shine through the top somehow.

Uncle came down to us this morning, just before Louis came back, and told us we were to begin lessons again to-morrow. Just think of that! We were going to grumble, when we remembered our promise to trust him, and we can't help hoping this strange order has something to do with getting rid of Louis.

It seems to-day is Louis' birthday, and Aunt Louisa's first thought, when she got back from L'Orient, was to order in some cakes, fruit, and champagne, to celebrate it. To our surprise, she asked Aunt Mary to let us boys dine alone, saying, "They will be more at ease without us." We *were* astonished, and we wanted Bertha and Margaret at least to share our feast, but Louis said he would have no little girls bothering him on his birthday.

I can't say Gustav and I enjoyed our grand dinner very much. It seemed so greedy for three boys to

shut themselves up alone, to eat all the dainties Aunt Louisa provided, and before dessert was on the table Louis had managed to quarrel with both of us. He gave himself worse airs than ever, tossed off glass after glass of wine, told us he was a man now, and meant to have his own way in everything: as if he did not get it now.

We were hard at work at our lessons all the morning, and Louis, who at first said he would join us, soon got tired of sitting still, and went off, as he said, to find Margaret and Bertha. They, however, were learning some new kind of fancy work with Aunt Mary, so that there was no one for Louis either to play with or to tease.

I could not write much in my journal, mamma, either yesterday or the day before. Uncle really worked us very hard, and I must run down to him now.

Hurrah! Hurrah! They are gone! Aunt Louisa and Louis are gone, but Margaret is still here. Louis found being left to himself so dull, that he persuaded his mother to return home. We could scarcely conceal our delight. They started quite early this morning, and as soon as they were gone, Gustav and I turned head over heels on the beach, clapped our hands, and shouted, "Hurrah! Hurrah!" till Bertha and Margaret ran out to see what was the matter. We felt ashamed to let Margaret know the real cause of our rejoicing;

but I am half afraid she guessed it, for she has been very quiet and thoughtful all day.

At ten o'clock we had got our lesson-books out as usual, but we had not sat down when uncle and aunt came in.

"Away with lesson-books!" cried uncle; "go out and enjoy yourselves! The hard work I made you do was only a manœuvre for getting rid of Louis."

With one accord we flung our dictionaries in the air, and you can imagine how we thanked uncle. He seemed very much amused at us, and told us we were to have the rest of our holidays entirely to ourselves.

We have finished our lighthouse, mamma, and you would really be surprised to see how nice it looks. It is so high we have to take a ladder down to climb it now, and it is covered in. Uncle let the village carpenter make us a wooden roof, and has given us a lamp which can be hung inside the roof, the sides of which are open, so that the light shines through. This lamp is to be lit on stormy nights only, and when we go away we shall leave a supply of oil with Peter. You see we have done something really worth doing in the holidays.



WE FLUNG OUR DICTIONARIES UP IN THE AIR. Page 176.



CHAPTER XX.

THE ACCIDENT — A PAGE OR TWO FROM BERTHA — THE JOURNEY HOME — CONCLUSION.

THERE has been such a rough sea to-day. I have been sitting astride on a breakwater, letting the spray dash over me. The noise all the morning has been deafening, and when I came in I asked uncle the time in such a voice of thunder that he started up and put his hands to his ears. We shouted at each other at dinner as if we were all deaf. We are going off on one of our old expeditions this afternoon, to a rather dangerous group of rocks. They say the stones on the top roll down suddenly, and that more than one accident has happened. We are ordered to keep together. I shall take my journal with me, as I like to write down anything very particular that happens

directly afterwards, and I have a feeling that something particular will happen to-day.

Nothing particular has happened yet, mamma. We have only been wandering about, picking up shells and sea-weeds. We are going to have some lunch, and then go into a cavern with some curiosities in it.

We enjoyed our lunch immensely; we ate up everything. Bertha did not want to go in the cavern, so I stayed with her. I began to write as if nothing had happened, mamma, but it hurts me so I must give it up. I can only just tell you that I got bruised by the falling of a stone yesterday, whilst the others were in the cavern, and ——

You will be surprised to see my writing instead of Robert's, dear aunt. I am Bertha, and it is through me that he is ill. I am going to tell you all about it for him. I saw he had been trying to write his journal when I came in, so I asked if I should do it for him. I am sitting at his table, and I have put Ella—that's my doll—in the arm-chair beside him. Robert has let me read the last page, that I may know how to go on. I see he has not told you how he hurt himself, and I am half afraid you will be angry with me. Please forgive me, for I am very sorry.

You know I don't like going into caverns: they are dark; I think there may be horrid creatures in them;

so, when the others went, I took Ella and sat down with her beneath a shady rock. Robert joined me, and amused himself with climbing the rock. Presently I heard a noise; I looked up, and saw a big stone rolling upon me. I was too frightened to do more than scream. It would have killed me, if it had fallen on me; but Robert, who was on the rock near where the stone fell from, rushed forward and kicked the stone, so that it rolled over without touching me or Ella. But poor Robert slipped, and fell all the way down to the ground. I ran to him, but he lay quite still and quiet. I thought he was killed. I went to the cavern-door to call the others, but the door was shut, and though I tried hard I could not open it. Then I dipped my handkerchief in the sea, and laid it all wet on Robert's forehead. He opened his eyes then, and said:

"Help me up, Bertha; I am not much hurt."

But when I tried to help him, he gave such a groan I was obliged to leave him alone. It seemed a very long time before the others came back, and, when they did, they were all frightened. Mamma got some wine and gave it to Robert, and Neptune took him up in his arms and carried him home.

Papa asked me how it had happened, and I told him exactly. He said if I had remembered that he had told me not to sit just under the rocks, Robert

would not have been hurt. I know it is true, aunt; I am very, very sorry.

When I had written that, Robert called me, and asked me to let him read what I had written; so I did. Then he said, "Now put down what I dictate, and I will sign it." This is Robert's dictation:—

"Don't be uneasy about me, mother dear; I am not much hurt, only bruised. They say I shall get up in a few days. It wasn't quite Bertha's fault; perhaps my climbing on the rock above her head made the stone roll down. Everybody is so good to me. Neptune shouts 'Good morning, little master!' under my window every morning, and everybody in the house comes to see me in turn. An idea has come into my head. It is to build a stone roof for our lighthouse on the model of our wooden one. I have done it in cardboard, with Margaret to help me. The difficulty will be about letting the light through.

"My love to you, dear mamma,

"ROBERT."

Now this is from Bertha. "Robert looks much better already, aunt, and mamma says I am to say he is only shaken and bruised."

"BERTHA."

I am all right again, mamma; you see I am writing



I SAW A BIG STONE ROLLING UPON ME. Page 170

this myself. Except that I am a little stiff, I don't feel a bit different from what I did before my accident. I have only three days more here, so I shall not write in my journal again, unless I add a few lines the last evening.

I shall see you again to-morrow, mamma; how delightful that will be! I have distributed the presents you sent to all my friends here; they were so pleased. When I gave old Neptune the purse you had knitted for him, he coloured up with pleasure, and wanted me to take Ricoco to you. As for Peter and Marianne, they are never tired of looking at the pretty shoes and stockings. They fit beautifully, and Marianne told me that their old ones were much too small for them. Bertha thinks Ella is prettier than ever in her new hat; she only wishes "Rose" could see her. Half the sweets you sent the little ones are gone already, and Gustav says he has wanted a new cricket-bat for ever so long. So you see you have hit upon just the right thing for everybody.

Our stone roof was a failure! It would not have done half so well as the wooden one. I have just been down to the beach to take a last look at the lighthouse. I wonder if I shall ever see it again. Now I must pack up all my treasures. Neptune has found an old chest for me. Nurse would not hear of my packing my sea-creatures and shells amongst my clothes. Not many

of the sea-creatures are alive now, and I don't know how to manage about leaving them in sea-water.

Everything is packed now, mamma, and I shall carry my aquarium—all that is left of it—in the basket Griffin came in.

Here we are, at Auray; we have an hour to wait, so I will just put a few lines in my journal. I have said good-bye to everybody. I am glad that is over—it was horrid. Bertha sobbed like a baby, and Gustav looked very glum. Uncle says he will bring them all to Paris when his ship comes home. I spilt nearly all the salt water in my aquarium in the train; some of it went over a passenger's coat, but he was very good-natured about it, and only asked me what I had got there. Nurse has taken charge of it now, and I have only my satchel and a little handbag containing some refreshments and my precious journal to look after. Nurse says you will hardly know me, I am so much grown and so brown.

Here I am, at home again; mamma, looking as dear and nice as ever, met me at the station. She *did* know me, but she says I am taller and more manly. I go back to college to-morrow, so I shall not be able to keep my journal any longer.

ROBERT.

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